

**STATE DEPARTMENT TRAINING:
INVESTING IN THE WORKFORCE TO ADDRESS
21ST CENTURY CHALLENGES**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT,
THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE, AND THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SUBCOMMITTEE

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

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STATE DEPARTMENT TRAINING: INVESTING IN THE WORKFORCE TO ADDRESS 21ST CENTURY CHALLENGES

TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 2011

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT
MANAGEMENT, THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE,
AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,
OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:03 a.m., in room SD-342, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Daniel K. Akaka, Chairman of the Subcommittee, presiding.

Present: Senators Akaka and Coburn.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR AKAKA

Senator AKAKA. I call this hearing of the Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia to order. I want to welcome our witnesses. Aloha and thank you for being here today.

Today's hearing, State Department Training: Investing in the Workforce to Address 21st Century Challenges, will examine the results of the Government Accountability Office (GAO) review on that topic. We will also discuss key recommendations from a recent report by the American Academy of Diplomacy (AAD) and the Stimson Center on Diplomatic Professional Education and Training.

Advancing America's interest in safeguarding global security is becoming ever more complex. According to Defense Secretary Gates, a robust civilian capability, coupled with a strong defense capability, is essential to preserving U.S. national security interests around the world.

Today, GAO is releasing a report finding that the State Department has developed an extensive training program for its employees. In recent years, the department has focused on increasing staffing levels and investing in training programs. State offers a wide variety of education and training opportunities, including traditional classroom, as well as computer-based training.

However, GAO identified areas needing improvement. More specifically, GAO found that State does not yet comprehensively assess its training needs, track training costs and delivery, or evaluate training using outcome-based performance measures. I urge State

(1)

to work closely with GAO to implement its recommendations. In this tough budget climate, it is more important than ever for the department to conduct the planning and evaluation necessary to fully support its funding requests and target limited resources strategically.

The House-passed budget would cut 16 percent from State and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). I believe this cut is shortsighted and could lead to greater long-term costs. The events in the Middle East and North Africa over the past few months underscore the need for robust and agile State Department capabilities. Iraq and Afghanistan also will continue to present complex long-term diplomatic and development challenges.

Around the world, the work of the State Department helps build more stable societies, which minimizes the potential for conflict, lowering the human and financial costs of military engagement. Meeting these critical challenges requires investment in the training and professional education needed for State Department employees to effectively advance U.S. foreign policy interests. It is essential to the department's operations and our Nation's security to provide State with the resources to properly staff and train its most valuable asset—its workforce.

The American Academy of Diplomacy and others have recommended that State maintains a 15 percent personnel float to allow for training without hindering the department's operations. The department has made great strides to try to attain the staffing necessary for long-term training, but the current funding environment has created a great deal of uncertainty.

Congress must do its job to eliminate the funding uncertainty. We cannot expect the Federal agencies to efficiently or effectively implement long-term strategies with short-term funding extensions.

I look forward to hearing from our first panel of witnesses and welcome them here today: Ambassador Nancy J. Powell, the Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of Human Resources (HR) at the Department of State; Ruth Whiteside, Director of the Foreign Service Institute, also at the Department of State; and Jess Ford, the Director of International Affairs and Trade at the Government Accountability Office. Good to see you back again.

As you know, it is the custom of this Subcommittee to swear in all witnesses and I would ask all of you to stand and raise your right hand.

Do you swear that the testimony you are about to give this Subcommittee is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you, God?

Ms. POWELL. I do.

Ms. WHITESIDE. I do.

Mr. FORD. I do.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you. Let it be noted in the record that the witnesses answered in the affirmative.

Before we start, I want you to know that your full written statements will be part of the record and I would also like to remind you to please limit your oral remarks to 5 minutes.

Ambassador Powell, will you please proceed with your statement?

TESTIMONY OF THE HON. NANCY J. POWELL,¹ DIRECTOR GENERAL, FOREIGN SERVICE AND DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Ms. POWELL. Mr. Chairman, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today to talk about the State Department's efforts to ensure that our people are trained effectively to address the foreign policy challenges of the 21st Century.

We worked closely with the GAO team on its study of our training and we welcome their recommendations. The State Department carries out U.S. foreign policy in increasingly complex and often perilous environments. The last decade has been marked by a growing number of global threats to our security, including violent extremism, trafficking in narcotics and persons, natural disasters and pandemics. In order to manage these threats, we must build productive partnerships with other countries to help strengthen their capabilities. We recognize that we must continue to reach out to influence public opinion and build our diplomatic presence where our interests are most at stake.

In December, the State Department issued the first ever Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR), which provides a blueprint for elevating American civilian power to better advance our foreign policy interests. The QDDR also calls on the department to deploy additional personnel and resources to emerging powers and centers of global and regional influence, such as Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, Russia, South Africa and Turkey.

We must ensure that our employees receive the support and training they need to succeed in these posts, as well as when they move on to their next assignment or return home. The Bureau of Human Resources is responsible for the State Department's greatest assets, its personnel. The Civil Service, Foreign Service and locally-employed (LE) staff will advance the interests of the United States.

Our mission spans the full course of employee services from before employees are hired until after they have retired. We work hand in hand with the Foreign Service Institute to ensure that employees of our three different workforces are well equipped to handle the demands of their jobs.

In this report, GAO recognized the wide variety of training we have designed to provide our people with the knowledge and skills to address today's diplomatic challenges. GAO also noted some areas where we could improve. I would like to briefly discuss what we have done to strengthen our training program. My colleague, Foreign Service Institute (FSI) Director Dr. Ruth Whiteside, will provide greater detail about FSI's programs.

Effective training is essential to the success of our people in meeting our foreign policy objectives. We agree with GAO that training programs, whether they be for our Foreign Service employees, Civil Service employees, or locally-employed staff, will not succeed unless we first fully assess our training needs.

To better assess our Foreign Service needs, we completed a comprehensive job analysis for Foreign Service generalists in 2007 and

¹ The prepared statement of Ms. Powell appears in the appendix on page 29.

one for a specialist in 2009. FSI used the results of these analyses to modify its course offerings. We have created a career development plan (CDP) for generalists and specialists that outlines the knowledge, skills and expertise they will need throughout their career.

The situation with our Civil Service employees is a bit different. Entry-level employees have well-defined training needs and many enter through highly structured Federal internship programs that have their own training requirements. We are also developing a formal needs assessment for our Civil Service workforce. For our 43,000 locally-employed staff in 270 different posts around the world, we require flexibility in assessing needs and planning in administrative training. We have increased training for these staff at our regional centers, which allows them to take many of the same professional courses given to United States staff. We supplement these opportunities with professional conferences and other training.

Another challenge that we face as we bring in large numbers of new Foreign Service and Civil Service employees is the experience gap with our workforces. Approximately 33 percent of Foreign Service employees and 36 percent of Civil Service employees currently have less than 5 years of experience with the department and 61 percent with less than 10. We are continuing our formal and informal mentoring programs to help them. This is also an issue that the American Academy of Diplomacy addresses and Dr. Whiteside and I work closely with them.

I want to take just a minute to touch on another training issue that I know is of interest to you, Senator, strengthening our foreign language capabilities, which are central to achieving our Nation's foreign policy goals. We will transmit to you today the formal copy of our language strategy, which has been completed and cleared. But in the meantime, we have been working to align our tools in terms of recruitment incentives, career requirements and assignments, along with that strategy.

With the news over the past few weeks highlighting how our world is changing and increasing the complexity of the State Department's mission, it is highly appropriate that we are talking about training today. Our people are key to our success and we must ensure that they are fully equipped to handle not only today's challenges, but are prepared to meet tomorrow's as well.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to speak today and I will be happy to take your questions. Thank you.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Ambassador, for your statement. Director Whiteside, please proceed with your statement.

TESTIMONY OF RUTH A. WHITESIDE,¹ DIRECTOR, FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Ms. WHITESIDE. Thank you very much, Senator. It is a great honor to be here with you today to talk about this important subject.

The GAO report has given us some very helpful insights into ways we can enhance our training programs. We were very pleased

¹ The prepared statement of Ms. Whiteside appears in the appendix on page 38.

that the report found that the department was meeting 26 of the 32 attributes of the strongest Federal training, strategic training and development efforts. We welcome the recommendations they have made in other areas where we can strengthen our actions and in fact, we have already closed out one of their recommendations on curriculum design guidance.

The Foreign Service Institute is the department's principal training arm. We provide career-long training programs for all the department's employees, Foreign Service, Civil Service, and foreign nationals overseas. Our programs include over 600 classroom courses and over 200 in-house developed distance learning courses offered to our worldwide workforce.

We train everyone in the department from our newest Foreign Service and Civil Service employees through our ambassadors as they prepare to depart for their assignments overseas. Our curriculum covers disciplines as diverse as management, consular, public diplomacy, politics and economic reporting, negotiations, area studies, among many others.

In addition to these traditional areas, we are providing training and stability operations for those destined for our most challenging assignments in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan and other unstable countries.

Foreign language instruction, as the director general said, is critical to our diplomats' ability to communicate America's message overseas and we provide language training in more than 70 languages. Leadership training is also an important focus and we are training everyone from first-time supervisors to newly promoted senior Foreign and Civil Service employees and we work closely with employees and family members as they transition overseas to help them anticipate and cope with issues they face, ranging from security and dangerous overseas environments to raising resilient Foreign Service children, to returning from high-stress assignments and moving back into mainstream assignments.

The FSI curriculum is geared to support the entire embassy team and in our training audience we include students from 47 other Federal Government agencies who work in our embassies and many members of the military who also serve in our embassies abroad.

We face many challenges for providing training for today's complex foreign affairs environment. The secretary's Diplomacy 3.0 hiring initiative has increased our training enrollments over 50 percent from pre-deployment days. I mentioned our stability operations curriculum, a new area that has led us into much more training with the military and understanding civilian-military relationships overseas.

And we heeded the call from Congress and the GAO and others to strengthen interagency training, and we have created programs such as the National Security Executive Leadership Seminar for GS-15s and Foreign Service Officer (FSO)-1s from all across the government.

A continuing challenge is the need to train a workforce that is deployed worldwide and we are proud to be leaders in the area of computer-based distance learning training, which makes it possible for our workforce to train over the internet 24/7 from wherever

they are in the world. Today we have more than 200 courses ranging from foreign languages to trade craft, to supervisory skills, to the basics of reconstruction and stabilization, to augment the training that we do in the classroom and to allow folks, particularly our local employees overseas who would never have the opportunity perhaps for training, to access these invaluable resources.

We work closely with the director general's staff and others in the bureau to assure that our training is focused on the department's needs and anticipates future requirements. We regularly review reports like the GAO reports from other parts of the department, inspector general's reports, work of the director general's office, like the job analysis she mentioned, and external reports, such as the Academy of American Diplomacy report we will be talking about later today. We are delighted to see Ambassador Neumann here and we work closely with him in that important study.

In conclusion, sir, the men and women of the department, Civil Service, the Foreign Service, and our locally-employed staff have chosen the path of public service and they are doing tough jobs often in very tough locales and at great personal risk. They deserve the best preparation we can provide them to do their jobs at a very high level and to help them develop into future leaders. Especially in an era of tight budgets, as you mentioned, training is critical to ensure that our employees are performing their work with maximum efficiency and effectiveness.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for letting us be here and we look forward to your questions.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Director Whiteside, for your statement.

Mr. Ford, will you please proceed with your statement?

TESTIMONY OF JESS T. FORD,¹ DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND TRADE TEAM, U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Mr. FORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to be here today to discuss our report which is being released, as you mentioned in your opening statement. Because the State Department is the lead agency for U.S. foreign policy, its personnel requires certain knowledge, skills, and abilities to equip them to address the global security threats and challenges facing the United States, such as fighting terrorism, implementing AIDS, HIV-AIDS and other pandemic problems, environmental degradation and a number of other foreign policy issues.

From Fiscal Year 2006 to 2010, the State Department's funding for training has grown 62 percent, up to approximately \$266 million for this year. It covers training in a number of key skill areas that have been mentioned by the other witnesses, primarily in the areas of foreign language proficiency, area studies, information technology (IT), consular duties and other important endeavors that are primarily under the aegis of the FSI, the Foreign Service Institute.

Our prior work has identified staffing and foreign language shortfalls at the State Department. These challenges are directly

¹The prepared statement of Mr. Ford appears in the appendix on page 45.

related to their needs to address shortfalls in the mid-level area, in particular, and also in the area of foreign language. We discussed these issues with you approximately a year ago.

Today the department is currently involved in a major challenge in Iraq where they are trying to take over for the military responsibility there, which is one of the greatest hardship posts that State Department personnel are going to be involved in. The recent departmental initiatives, particularly Diplomacy 3.0, a multi-year effort launched in 2009, is meant to increase the Foreign Service by 25 percent and the Civil Service by 13 percent by 2014.

Mr. Chairman, our report today discusses a number of issues related to the State Department's training. We acknowledge that the State Department has taken a number of steps to incorporate the elements of an effective training program. For example, the State Department has a workforce training plan. FSI has an annual schedule of courses for both classroom and distance learning for all State employees.

State also has a range of evaluation mechanisms to assess employee satisfaction with training and seeks feedback through these annual training surveys. However, State has not developed—we believe State can improve in a number of areas, which we have covered extensively in our report.

First, we believe that the State Department needs to complete a systematic, comprehensive training needs assessment to incorporate all bureaus and overseas posts. Since 2007, the State Department has acknowledged that bureaus in particular have not formally conducted annual training needs assessments. Without such systematic assessments, State cannot be assured that its training is connected to all of its true needs and priorities.

State indicated that the Bureau of Human Resources intends to form an interagency group to address the comprehensive need and we heard earlier this morning that they have started to take some analyses which are designed to address our recommendation.

State has developed guidance designed to improve information for employees about training opportunities, career ladders, and paths, and how training can help employees with their career goals. We found some issues regarding the usefulness of some of the guides that they have prepared. We found that specific training requirements designed by bureaus and posts for certain groups of employees are not always clearly identified in their training guidance. State has acknowledged that they need to address this issue and are going to be addressing our recommendations meant to improve the guides.

State has also not developed a data collection and analysis plan for evaluating training, which could help ensure that appropriate procedures and criteria for evaluating training are systematically applied across the board. As a result, it is not clear whether and how State systematically makes decisions regarding how training programs will be evaluated using different methods or tools or how results will be used. Once again, we have recommended that the State Department address this issue and they have indicated they plan to do so.

State has not sufficiently demonstrated consistent and appropriate support for training, because it does not track detailed data

and information on training costs and delivery that would allow for such analysis and a comparison of employees in different skill groups, particularly at the bureau and post level.

For example, State could not provide data on the percentage of foreign affairs or political officers that have completed required, recommended, or suggested training for their areas of work. We believe this type of analysis will help them identify the needs and skills that they need in the future and we have urged them to include more analysis of this type of training endeavor.

Finally, State has developed certain training-related goals and measures, but the measures do not fully address all of the goals and are intended to be more output versus outcome oriented. As a result, they could not provide clear means of determining whether State's training efforts have achieved the overall goals that they have set for themselves. Again, we made a recommendation in our report for them to address that and they indicated they would do so.

Mr. Chairman, I am going to stop and conclude my statement here and I would be happy to address any further questions.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you, Mr. Ford, for your statement.

Mr. Ford, as you know, the State Department has invested more heavily in training in recent years. Its funding for training grew as you mentioned, by 62 percent between Fiscal Years 2006 and 2010, when State devoted about \$255 million to employee training. At the same time, the number of Foreign Service, Civil Service and locally-employed staff increased by about 17 percent.

Your report highlights the importance of evaluating training efforts. With State's current planning and evaluation, can we be sure if State has sufficient funding for training and if it is achieving the desired results?

Mr. FORD. Well, let me comment on a couple of things that I think are important here. First, the department does have some mechanisms to evaluate its training endeavor. I mentioned earlier the annual surveys that they conduct for employees overseas. They tend to focus on levels of satisfaction with the training that had been received and the department collects useful information on that.

I think there are a couple of areas that we think the department needs to concentrate a little bit more on and that has to do with the results of their programs. They tend to focus primarily on employee satisfaction. We would like to see more analysis on the actual impact of the training so that if they are in a position where they have to make tradeoffs about the type of training that is going to be provided because of budgetary reasons, they will have a solid basis for determining where they need to make that investment.

So our recommendation in the area of evaluation is designed for them to have better information to make better investment decisions so that if they have to make adjustments in training because of budgetary constraints, they will be in a better position to prioritize and spend the money in the areas that are most important for their mission.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you. Ambassador Powell, what is the current status of implementing the Secretary's Diplomacy 3.0 initia-

tive to increase Foreign Service employees by 25 percent and Civil Service employees by 13 percent by Fiscal Year 2014?

Ms. POWELL. I am very happy to report, Senator, that using the funds that were provided in Fiscal Years 2009 and 2010, we have been able to increase the size of the Foreign Service by 16 percent and the Civil Service by 8 percent. These increases have provided us with a number of opportunities with some very, very highly talented people that we have been able to recruit. They are serving around the world at this point. They are in training. It has allowed us to increase the number of individuals who are in training and still staff our positions overseas.

We have also created 600 new positions that are addressing critical needs in the areas that we have talked about earlier today, some of the national security, some of the hard languages, global climate change, women's rights, food security, so a variety of things that were urgent needs and we have been able to fill many of the vacancies, particularly at the entry- and mid-level that have plagued our service over the past few years when hiring was not as robust.

Senator AKAKA. Ambassador Powell, what effect does the current budget uncertainty have on State operations and training, and does State have contingency plans to meet its workforce and training needs in the event of funding shortfalls?

Ms. POWELL. Senator, the answer is obviously difficult for all of us as we deal with the Fiscal Year 2011 funding. We continue to work on the program that we had set up with the budget using the continuing resolution. We are working very hard in HR to look at various scenarios involving different budget scenarios. The fiscal year (FY) 2012 budget has included additional positions in the 3.0 effort so that we can continue that effort in Fiscal Year 2012.

Senator AKAKA. Mr. Ford, State uses different models of training more extensively with different employee groups. For example, most FSI classroom training is provided to Foreign Service employees, and locally-employed staff overseas receive the largest amount of computer-based training.

Did GAO assess whether the type of training provided to the different groups is appropriate?

Mr. FORD. Our report does not specifically identify the appropriateness or the types of training that the department is employing. We acknowledge that the distance learning has been an expanding area and that the locally-engaged staff at the over 200 missions overseas frequently use that as a device to increase their skill sets.

I think the issue that we raise in our report has to do with the overall needs of the department and we think they need to have a solid foundation of defining what the needs are and then the tools that they would use to carry those programs out, be that classroom training, distance learning or external training, would be part of the plan that they would pull together to define which areas require the greatest investment.

So our view is if they—we want them to do a comprehensive assessment to identify what those requirements are and then they would look at the tools that they have in place to address those.

That would include distance learning, classroom training or external training.

Senator AKAKA. Mr. Ford, did GAO identify any specific additional training that should be required for certain personnel?

Mr. FORD. As part of our report, we met with and discussed with a number of bureau officials at the department, functional bureaus and geographic bureaus, as well as some State Department employees overseas. We contacted 12 posts in the course of our work. Our conversations with those individuals indicated there are some areas that they believe the department needs to focus on in training. A lot of it has to do with occupational subject matter training, training in areas such as program management, contract management, some of the areas that we had in some of our prior work had identified areas where we think the department needs to improve in.

So again, we would like to see the department's assessment process clearly identify which of these programmatic occupational areas should be greater focused on in the training regime, because clearly the people in the field and at the bureau level have indicated these are areas that they think further training may be required.

Senator AKAKA. Director Whiteside, as you know, three regional centers provide some training to State employees, particularly locally-employed staff. However, GAO found that each center's model for developing and delivering training, as well as their coordination with FSI, varies. GAO also found that posts in African and Near Eastern Affairs regions currently are not formally served by the regional centers.

Has State considered providing a more centralized and strategic process for offering training through the regional centers?

Ms. WHITESIDE. Thank you very much for the question, sir. I think the answer to that is a definite yes. We have been very proactive in the last year and increasingly with the regional centers in terms of coordinating the training that they have done.

We have recognized that because they are in the region, we can leverage their locations. We have been working with them to identify what we call adjunct faculty. These are persons who serve in the region, often locally-employed staff that can be trained to offer training. Then we are able to extend the number of FSI courses in the field that do not have to be taught by sending an instructor from FSI to the field, but that can be taught in the field by someone who has been trained by FSI using FSI training materials.

We have a very active program now with the three, as you mentioned, the Western Hemisphere, the European Bureau, and the East Asia and Pacific Bureau, and they are in fact now reaching out more to Africa and the Middle East through arrangements that will reach those Foreign Service National employees (FSNs) as well, so regional training and using adjunct faculty to expand the reach of training in the most efficient way possible is a very high goal of ours.

Senator AKAKA. Well, thank you for those responses. Good morning, Senator Coburn.

Senator COBURN. Good morning.

Senator AKAKA. Good to have you. I would like to ask Senator Coburn for his questions.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR COBURN

Senator COBURN. Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to be here. I have a short statement. How many of you are familiar with what the Deficit Commission recommendation was in terms of the State Department; anybody familiar with the recommendation?

The recommendation of the Deficit Commission was to essentially reduce State Department personnel by 10 percent based on studies that we reviewed. And based on the criticisms in the report that was released by the GAO today, every area of the Federal Government has some problems, including yours truly in the Senate.

The thing that concerns me is we have Diplomacy 3.0 with this goal of ramping up at a time when we're on an absolutely unsustainable course in terms of being able to pay the bills. It is one thing to ramp up. It is the other thing to ramp up without proper training and also the proper controls on the training.

I wanted to come today to thank Senator Akaka for holding the hearing, one, but also to put into the record what is not going to happen in the future, and it is not going to get ramped up, because we do not have the dollars to do it. I also want to put into the record a criticism on locality pay.

Right now the State Department has 25,000 applicants for 900 positions. You essentially have 27 applicants for every one position that is open. The locality pay, which is another recommendation, in terms of comparison is something that we are not going to be able to afford in the future and it is going to go away and people ought to be expecting that.

Our troops do not get locality pay. Our military officers do not get foreign pay. The other thing that the Deficit Commission asked to be done is for every consulate to really assess whether or not they are absolutely necessary everywhere we have a consulate. It is a new day and it is really important that our leaders, such as you all, understand that we are going to be under very constricted resources for the next 20 years in this country and the absolute imperative of having an effective diplomacy effort is vital to us. We understand that.

But every area of our Federal Government is going to be required to contribute. It really works out that if we do not do that, we will be making these decisions in a very short time frame and not making them as effective as if we planned for them. I will not go into the reason why that is going to happen, but there are not many people that deny that is going to happen. We must do it in a thoughtful and in a very prudent manner as we go forward.

I appreciate tremendously the work of the GAO to raise the prudent questions that need to be raised for all of us to be better in what we do. I recognize Director Powell and Director Whiteside having a report that is critical of what we do in terms of training. It is not meant to be critical. It is meant to make us better and I hope that the report that is put forward will reenergize us in terms of comprehensive training for the very valuable State Department employees that we have.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Senator Coburn.

Ambassador Powell and Director Whiteside, in recent years, more State Department employees have been serving in dangerous locations and carrying out their missions beyond the walls of secured embassy compounds. The National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) 12 calls on the Federal Government to prepare all at-risk Federal employees for hostage or other isolation situations.

My question to you is, what steps has the department taken to implement this directive? Director Whiteside?

Ms. WHITESIDE. Sir, the directive is the specific responsibility of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security and their training program and we have as recently as within the last month been in touch with them about how to coordinate that in the government. I think currently that is being done primarily in our security training provided at post by our regional security officers (RSOs), who do an orientation for everyone who comes to their posts.

But they have very recently been in touch with us to talk about what more we need to do to implement this in the department.

Senator AKAKA. Ambassador Powell, how will the department use funds requested for fiscal year 2012 to implement this training and will the department require any additional resources?

Ms. POWELL. Senator, we will use our planning documents, the Bureau and Mission Strategic Plans, as well as for particularly working with FSI. We are also going to be informed by the implementation of the QDDR. There are a number of new requests for training, new areas for training, particularly emphasizing the need to develop people who are comfortable in the interagency setting here in Washington, overseas and we will be looking at those.

But we have a strategic plan that we are using. We have the new language plan that will also be available to us to guide the look at funding. Certainly looking ahead to implementing the GAO recommendations we will need to look at the cost for some of those in terms of the tracking.

We have already set aside time and effort for the assessment needs study that is going to be done in our Civil Service mission critical occupations. Those are some of the high priorities for us for that target. But we will continue with the language training, our leadership training, and the other areas that Dr. Whiteside supervises at FSI.

Senator AKAKA. Ambassador Powell, as you know well, foreign language skills are critical to carrying out the department's mission. I am pleased that the department has completed a strategic plan for foreign languages, which GAO called for in its 2009 foreign language report.

Please elaborate on what action State has taken or still plans to take to implement the recommendations for that report.

Ms. POWELL. We've been working very hard on the strategy itself, but in the meantime, taking some very important decisions, I believe, to implement things that will come to total fruition after it becomes part of our standard strategy.

The working groups that have been working on language have worked particularly hard on identifying languages for incentive pay. We have been studying what needs to be done in that area. We have also set up a new, and I think a much improved and stra-

tegic approach to designating languages as critical, requiring training or proficiency.

We also have a new strategy that's been developed and is going to be used to look at recruitment language incentives, deciding which ones will gain people extra credit in the registry after they have passed the Foreign Service test.

I am very pleased to tell you that we have developed a language training and assignment model. The pilot has been completed. I had my first briefing on it last week. It appears to have great promise not only for language training, but we think it may be able to address some of the needs that the GAO has identified and help us with other areas of State Department training in terms of modeling our needs on a longer term scale.

We have been very pleased that Diplomacy 3.0 has provided us with additional opportunities to put students in hard languages. Our Arabic and Chinese students have expanded greatly, particularly since September 11, 2001, and we continue to recruit Dari, Farsi, Pashto speakers in our recruitment efforts, but also provide additional training for people that need those languages at FSI.

Senator AKAKA. Ambassador Powell, I am a strong supporter of rotational programs to improve government integration and coordination. I am pleased that the department recognizes the importance of understanding interagency processes and has incorporated rotational arrangements into its training program.

According to QDDR, employees will be encouraged to undertake short-term detail assignments in other agencies. Will you please elaborate on this program and what efforts the department is taking to encourage employees to participate in it?

Ms. POWELL. The QDDR recommendations are under review right now and we have not really begun the implementation project. But the genesis of the idea was to support exactly what you were saying, of trying to provide people with familiarity with the operations of other government agencies with whom we work directly, particularly overseas now. Our country teams are very definitely interagency.

I was in Mexico last week, or 2 weeks ago. The number of agencies sitting around the country team table is very impressive and the coordination that our people need to be able to bring to that effort can be developed through these details.

We are looking particularly at details with USAID and expanding the details we have with the Department of Defense (DOD). We have greatly expanded the number of political advisors and the number of students who are attending DOD facilities and this has certainly encouraged a much better rapport as people—our provincial reconstruction teams in Afghanistan or Iraq, they already know each other. They already know the mechanisms for working across interagency lines.

We anticipate that providing that we have the funds, we will be able to expand those opportunities to other agencies. Center for Disease Control (CDC) comes to mind, particularly for those programs that are working with HIV/AIDS around the world, but other details with the agencies here in Washington.

Senator AKAKA. Ambassador Powell and Director Whiteside, due to the mid-level staffing gaps, more entry-level officers are being

assigned to supervisory positions. The Academy recommends that all new officers in supervisory positions take a short course in supervising and mentoring employees, as well as supervising employees in other cultures.

What steps has the department taken to make sure that officers have the skills needed to be effective managers? Director Whiteside.

Ms. WHITESIDE. Sir, thank you very much. I think this is a very, very important question and one the director general particularly has encouraged us to focus on very specifically. In the last year, we have taken a number of steps in this regard. We have created a new fundamentals of supervision course that we are now offering 25 times, I believe, a year in this first year, to try to be sure that first-time supervisors—we realize that many of our new officers, new Foreign Service personnel going overseas, will supervise local employees in their first assignments, so we want to give them this basic understanding of supervision.

We have increased in our consular overseas training. For example, we have focused this entire year with the Bureau of Consular Affairs and with the director general staff on training consular officers who are first-time supervisors in consulates in the fundamentals of supervision and more nuts and bolts, if you may, of supervisory skills.

And currently we are developing a series of distance learning courses, one on the Foreign Service, one on the Civil Service, and one on the locally-employed staffing system, to give all of our employees worldwide a better understanding of these systems, better understanding of the requirements of each system, how people are promoted, how they are assigned, how they are trained, and those courses will be fundamental for everyone in our system on this important subject.

Ms. POWELL. Senator, if I could just add to that. Dr. Whiteside and I have particularly been working and have had the backing of the American Academy in their report on a project that we have found foundation money to do a pilot that will work with our first-time supervisors of American employees. They will be provided with classroom instruction.

And then we hope to have a recent retiree that will ride the circuit to their posts and see how they are implementing that training at post, talk to their supervisors to see what additional information, if we were able to do this again, that we could provide in the next class. We are quite excited about this as part of our attempt to improve supervision of both the American and the locally-engaged staff.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you. Ambassador Powell and Director Whiteside, the mid-level staffing gap also has created a shortage of mentors for younger State employees. The department has developed mentoring programs to address this experience gap. The Academy's report also recommends that State establish a core of rotating counselors to provide mentoring.

Would you please elaborate on State's mentoring programs and discuss your reactions to the Academy's recommendation as well?

Ms. POWELL. Senator, we have a very robust mentoring program. For those employees overseas, for our American employees, we

have charged the deputy chief of mission, the number two person at the embassy, with the formal responsibility.

But certainly in my remarks to the staffs as I travel around in other fora, we encourage everyone to be a mentor. We recognize that particularly if you are overseas, you can very quickly become the old timer in being able to help a brand new employee, whether they are just new to the Foreign Service or just new to post. So we encourage everyone to be a mentor.

Our senior employees have stepped up to fill this gap and I am very pleased with the mentoring programs. Several of our bureaus, including the Western Hemisphere Bureau, has created an entry-level coordinator that is designed to work with all of the entry-level officers throughout that region of the world, a very interactive web page that has video clips. It has a great deal of information for people, an opportunity to answer questions.

This has served as a force multiplier for our mentors at the smaller posts in particular. There are other efforts in East Asia, in the Middle East that are being done. Our ambassadors are particularly seized with this and see it not only in the interest of improving their mission, but ensuring that people have the opportunities that they have.

We have started similar programs for our locally-engaged staff and for the Civil Service with full-time mentors and then something called situational mentoring in which we have several hundred people who have volunteered to be experts on a particular subject. There is a database and if you are interested in that particular subject, there is a group of people that you can request assistance from, go have a cup of coffee, or if it is a more formal question, they will assist you in getting to the right place in the department to get the assistance that you need.

But this is a constant effort. We are very pleased with the volunteers that have done this and we will continue to expand it.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you. On the same question, Mr. Ford, what are the key elements needed to ensure an effective mentoring program?

Mr. FORD. Well, I think there's a couple—several things here. First of all, it's encouraging to hear that the department is focusing on mentoring. This is an issue not unique to State Department. Many Federal agencies in town, including our own, we have a lot of younger employees that we are trying to teach how to do our work, but also to mentor them in how they advance their careers.

I think that the critical thing here is identifying first of all what the needs are of the employees. I think it is important, particularly for junior staff, to have a good understanding of what their basic needs are, what kind of skills they need to develop particularly early on in their career and that the mentoring program be directly tied to that so that the mentoring has not just generic value by having a senior person, for example, like myself, to tell my staff what I think is important.

I think it needs to be tied to what their skills needs are and that needs to be fully developed and defined in order to have an effective program. So I would say that is the key step of a mentoring program that is not unique to the State Department. I think it is

true in general for Federal agencies that are now staffed with a lot of junior staff.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you for that response. I have a final question for the State Department witnesses and then I will give Mr. Ford an opportunity for final comments.

Ambassador Powell and Director Whiteside, what do you expect to be the key challenges to implementing GAO's recommendations? Director Whiteside.

Ms. WHITESIDE. Sir, I think there are a couple of things. One is we are a worldwide workforce in 270 missions overseas and in many domestic facilities around the United States. Our workforce, particularly locally-engaged staff, I think vary so much from post to post. There are cultural differences, obviously, in every post in the world. There are levels of sophistication. Our local employee staff range from highly sophisticated professionals to those who work in support positions around the embassy.

So I think the key challenge will be how to assess the needs of this worldwide workforce when they are so geographically dispersed and very different within the mission itself. But I think we are very focused on being able to do that. We will work closely with the regional bureaus in this upcoming cycle of strategic planning where each mission overseas prepares its strategic plan, to come in to do our best to encourage them to help us identify the needs of those workforces so that we can then address them more strategically.

So I think the key challenges are simply the nature of our business that gives us such both dispersed and very diverse workforce. But I think we are very focused on trying to address the GAO's recommendations in that area.

Ms. POWELL. If I could echo that by pointing out that there is an additional complicating factor for us in that the world does not stay still. We are constantly having to anticipate and to react to the new challenges that come to us in the midst of designing a program that has to have enough flexibility to be able to do that.

I think, obviously, the resource constraints that were previewed here this morning are ones that we will have to take seriously as we design our programs and attempt to make sure that our people have the skills and the training that they need. But it is a very diverse workplace. The flexibility is very, very important, that we be able to anticipate and respond as the world changes. Thank you.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much for your response. Mr. Ford, would you like to make any final statements?

Mr. FORD. Yes, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I want to say that during the course of this assessment, the State Department was very cooperative with us. We work well with their staff. As I tried to say in my opening statement, we think there are a lot of positive things that the department is doing in the training area.

I think the key in the future is they have some challenges now because of the exigencies of operating in conflict zones. We are going to be civilianizing our efforts in Iraq. That is going to require a lot of manpower based on what the State Department is proposing and they are going to have challenges in training people for that mission.

I think the key here again, and if in fact there is a constrained budget environment, it is critical that the department is able to prioritize the most valuable types of training that they need to provide to their employees. We think the process they go through to help identify those priorities is critical and I think that if they take the right steps forward to identify what their real needs are in these kind of situations, that they will be able to identify what they really need so that they have the right skill sets being developed for the staff that they have to carry out their mission.

So I think I feel positive about the State Department's response to our report and we are hopeful that they will implement our recommendations and they will be able to provide Congress with some tangible information on what they are doing down the road as they go forward.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Ford. I want to thank this panel for your valuable testimony this morning and tell you that it will certainly help us in our work here in the Senate.

I would like at this time to ask the second panel of witnesses to come forward. [Pause.]

I want to welcome our second panel of witnesses, the Ambassador Ronald Neumann, President of the American Academy of Diplomacy; and Susan Johnson, President of the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA).

As you know, it is the custom of the Subcommittee to swear in all witnesses, so will you please stand and raise your right hands?

Do you swear that the testimony you are both about to give this Subcommittee is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help you, God?

Mr. NEUMANN. I do.

Ms. JOHNSON. I do.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you. Let it be noted in the record that the witnesses answered in the affirmative.

Before we start, I want to say that your written statement will be part of the record and I would like to remind you to limit your oral remarks to 5 minutes.

So Ambassador Neumann, will you please proceed with your statement?

TESTIMONY OF THE HON. RONALD E. NEUMANN,¹ PRESIDENT, AMERICAN ACADEMY OF DIPLOMACY

Mr. NEUMANN. Senator Akaka, as demonstrations sweep across the Arab World, we have seen exemplary performance by Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) taking risks to protect American citizens and report on developments. Yet despite the work of a number of superbly qualified Arab-speaking officers, our government lacks sufficient trained Arabic-speaking officers to fully understand and assess what is happening, to go beyond the glib English-speaking reporters in Tahrir Square to take the full measure of what Islamists, young people, demonstrators, and the jobless are saying off camera.

We lack these capacities because for years the department lacked the resources to train enough officers. The Director General and

¹ The prepared statement of Mr. Neumann appears in the appendix on page 55.

Dr. Whiteside are making progress in addressing the problem, but it will be years before they can compensate for the mistakes of the past. This is a microcosm of the training problem that you on this Subcommittee and your colleagues are going to make worse or better in the budgets of this and the next few years.

The American Academy of Diplomacy, an expert non-partisan organization that you know well, has just released this study of training and education necessary for our diplomats. This study found serious problems and makes specific recommendations, it builds on our earlier study of "*A Foreign Affairs Budget for the Future*" (FAB) and like that study, was funded by the Una Chapman Cox Foundation with, in this case, help from the American Foreign Service Association, Delavan Foundation and our own resources. Ambassador Robert Beecroft headed the work.

Let me highlight our most important issues and recommendations. First is the need for personnel. With congressional support, the State Department has made serious progress. However, the progress is not complete. Several hundred positions are needed still for training alone. The Department lacks an adequate number of positions for what the military calls a training float. Until an adequate reserve is created, all the recommendations of yours, ours, the Secretary of State, are frankly so much useless noise they cannot be implemented without sufficient personnel and funding.

Second, the personnel system must take more responsibility for ensuring that officers actually take the training they need. You might think, as I did previously, that mandatory and required are synonyms, but not in the State Department when it comes to training. Mandatory means no kidding, you have to do it. Required means you should do it, but because we need you elsewhere, you can get a waiver and skip it, and too much of the training officers need is required, which means it really isn't.

While resources are important, another issue is that assignment decisions are limited to immediate service needs and officers' personal preferences. Integrating assignments into how we produce experienced officers would significantly strengthen the service. The system already in place to do this, the Career Development Program (CDP), needs to be strengthened. We make recommendations to that end.

We see a need for integration of resources and authorities to arrive at a situation where in most cases officers must take the training they require before getting to their jobs. That is not now happening.

Third, diplomatic officers, like military counterparts, need to go beyond training on specifics to broader military education. As our military colleagues say, train for certainty, but educate for uncertainty. One of our most far reaching recommendations is to institute a full year of professional education for all middle grade officers. We know it cannot be done immediately. We urge that a gradually increasing cascade of officers be devoted to this end.

In this connection, I want to say that while we are generally strongly supportive of the administration's management of the department, to hire only at attrition is a mistake. Even if it is five officers, we think the direction of increase needs to be sustained.

There are many additional recommendations that I will not detail here. They cover ways to overcome the temporary gap in mid-level officers and improve supervision. They touch on better ways to train senior officers. I hope the Subcommittee will give all these recommendations due consideration.

Chairman Akaka, in closing, we recognize the difficult budgetary time. Nevertheless, let me leave you with one rather shocking figure and a final thought. The statistics which Director Powell mentioned is not new. Today two-thirds of U.S. Foreign Service Officers have less than 10 years of service. Let me repeat that. Two-thirds of our diplomats have less than 10 years of experience.

We cannot afford to leave their training to mistakes made on the way to experience. Not building our professional staff is akin to leaving maintenance of facilities undone. In the end it costs more in time and money to repair the damage. I hope as cuts are examined the Congress will recognize that diplomacy is an essential element of national security and by far the cheapest part in lives and dollars. But to the extent that cuts must be made, let them be made in programs rather than in personnel.

I assure you that over time the results will be to our country's benefit. Thank you and I am ready for your questions.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Ambassador, for your statement. Ms. Johnson, will you please proceed with your statement?

TESTIMONY OF SUSAN R. JOHNSON,¹ PRESIDENT, AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION

Ms. JOHNSON. Mr. Chairman, the American Foreign Service Association, welcomes this opportunity to speak before this Subcommittee on the subject of State Department training, professional education and formation, and I look forward very much to meeting with Senators Johnson and Coburn and their staffs on another occasion.

The question of professional education and training for 21st Century diplomacy and development goes to the heart of our national security readiness and competitiveness. Diplomacy and development are key instruments of our national power and should be our primary tools for advancing U.S. interest abroad.

There are no alternatives to diplomacy, as invariably military interventions are costly and complicated and must remain the option of last resort. AFSA is proud to represent employees not only of the State Department, but also of the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Foreign Commercial Service, the Foreign Agricultural Service and the International Broadcasting Bureau.

AFSA's over 11,000 active duty members represent today a much broader and more diverse range of concerns and aspirations than when I entered the Service in 1980. As AFSA president, one of my goals is to help ensure that the institutional environment in which our next generation of diplomats must work stays attuned and responsive to both the enduring and the new demands of their chosen profession.

¹ The prepared statement of Mr. Johnson appears in the appendix on page 63.

We therefore welcome the focus of this timely hearing on this important issue for our Nation's diplomatic service and look forward to a similar focus on our development service, USAID. As I noted in my written testimony, AFSA warmly welcomes the Academy of American Diplomacy (AAD) study on Forging a 21st Century Diplomatic Service for the United States through Professional Education and Training.

As Ambassador Neumann noted in his excellent testimony, the first three AAD recommendations focus on the urgent need to redress our chronic under investment in diplomacy and development by fully funding Diplomacy 3.0 hiring and providing a training reserve or float and by making a long-term commitment to investing in professional formation and training. We agree with him that if there is no training reserve, the remaining recommendations become almost meaningless.

In connection with AFSA's participation in the AAD study, we invited a number of former U.S. diplomats now in academia to help define a core body of knowledge that should be common to all U.S. diplomats. They noted the dramatic shifts in the geopolitical environment that foreshadow the rise of competing power centers and value systems and emphasize that marginal change in an effort to strengthen our diplomatic service will not be sufficient to meet coming challenges.

The huge advantage the United States enjoys in the conduct of its international affairs by virtue of our unparalleled hard and soft power does not detract from the need to exercise astute professional diplomacy to anticipate developments, to provide sound advice to promote our interests and avoid costly mistakes.

We need a first-class diplomatic service to maintain U.S. global leadership and to better advance and defend U.S. interests. AFSA also supports the GAO recommendations and believes that in order to undertake effective training needs assessment, the starting point must be a clear concept in definition of what we are training for, translated into operational terms and related to the central themes of the department's recently completed Quadrennial Diplomatic and Development Review.

Second, we would like to see greater recognition of the importance of a diplomatic service that can operate from a well-defined foundation of professional standards and ethics, education, skills and know-how that is shared, in common. Our military colleagues have demonstrated the role and importance of professional education and training in creating services that are more than the sum of their parts.

Third, AFSA believes that in order to prepare the next generation of American diplomats now in mid-career for a leadership role, there must be a system that ensures their participation in defining the needs and priorities of American diplomacy today. AFSA welcomes the growing recognition of the urgent need for increased investment in American diplomacy and in the Foreign Service as an institution.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. AFSA values your long-standing support of initiatives to enhance the diplomatic readiness of our civilian Foreign Service agencies and we particularly appreciate the leadership that you have shown in con-

vening this hearing and we look forward to continuing to serve as a resource to you and your colleagues. Thank you.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Ms. Johnson.

Ambassador Neumann, in your testimony, you stated the department still lacks an adequate number of positions for a training float. Although State has expanded positions for language training, it has not been able to do the same for training in leadership and other critical skills.

Will you please discuss how a training float could help support our overseas diplomatic operations?

Mr. NEUMANN. Senator Akaka, thank you for doing this hearing. Essentially, all aspects of training are geared to improving performance overseas, so I think it is therefore axiomatic that if you don't train, your performance will be less, unless you are extraordinarily lucky.

If the department continues to lack a float, it will be where it has been for many of these past years, pulling people to get them into jobs to diminish gaps in assignments and they will therefore, continue to be unavailable for the training that everybody agrees they ought to have. So I think the pieces couple together.

I do not think it will be possible, even with the best prioritization, to comment in a sense on Mr. Ford's earlier optimism. I am more skeptical. If the personnel do not exist to allow them to be withdrawn from the line, as it were, from the active work, then you can do a little better by prioritizing what you do not have. But after that, you will not get much better.

Senator AKAKA. As you both know, FSOs are serving in increasingly more remote and dangerous locations. The State Department provides security training to make sure FSOs have the proper skills to avoid, manage and respond to dangerous situations, such as hostage situations or the recent uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East.

To both of you, what additional steps should the department take to make sure FSOs are sufficiently trained for dangerous situations?

Mr. NEUMANN. Do you want to start? You have a constituent.

Senator AKAKA. Ms. Johnson.

Ms. JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In fact, that question is very important to AFSA because it is our members that we are talking about and their security and their ability to provide also for the security of their colleagues. And in this regard, I think we would certainly subscribe to the axiom that an ounce of prevention is worth a great deal.

So we believe that this issue should be looked at creatively to see whether what we are currently doing is adequate. I did hear a reference in, and I think it was Ambassador Powell's testimony, to the role of the RSOs in providing security training. We have often heard from our members that the RSOs are already overburdened with other responsibilities and often have not had any experience with training, and therefore, to rely on that as the principal mode of providing training at post is not sufficient.

Now, I realize that additional training is taking place in the department, or at FSI, prior to assignment. I do not know if that is required or mandatory and if there are any waivers, but I am hop-

ing that it is mandatory. We have heard and talked with Diplomatic Security about this and there are a number of efforts underway, or there are a number of courses actually underway—not underway now, but available, that train people in how to be aware of dangerous situations as they develop and how to escape from them.

But I think this brings us back again to the topic of importance to you, which is language training, and something that I have found in my experience, that if we are sending officers into potentially harm's way, to the extent that they are language capable, they will be better able to anticipate, prevent, manage, deal with those situations. So language training is not just training needed to better communicate. It is training to be more secure.

Mr. NEUMANN. It is a fascinating question you ask, Senator Akaka. It is one that I have perhaps more experience with than most having served in four wars, one as a soldier, three as a diplomat. I've had my embassy stormed in Bahrain and carried a weapon under threat situations in countries in the old days when we had no security, so I sort of lived this.

I subscribe to what Ms. Johnson said. I do believe that we have gotten a lot better at security training. One will never be perfect because there will always be new threats and new challenges, but the department is doing a great deal more.

I think one issue that needs to be addressed is not in the area of training, but in the area of decision making. How much risk do we want our officers to take? The department has historically been very risk-adverse, but we are living in situations where that is not a sufficiency. In my experience, what often happens is that officers actually take more risks than the department would prefer in order to accomplish their jobs.

I think there is a greater degree of courage in Foreign Service Officers than is often recognized in their public image and some of those who have worked for me have died in the line of duty. But I think the department has a responsibility to reconsider the issues of risks so that officers who have to take risks to accomplish their job do not have to risk their careers by stretching the regulations at the same time that they risk their lives for the performance of national goals.

That is an issue that is raised in the QDDR. It calls for a reexamination of this issue of risk. I hope the department follows through. It is the kind of thing where if the Congress does what the department has asked and mandates the QDDR being instituted in law so that it has to be redone, is the kind of thing that will get follow-up in the future.

Thank you for asking the question, sir.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much. Let me call a very brief recess. [Recess.]

The Subcommittee will be in order.

I would like to continue with a question for Ms. Johnson. As you know, I asked Ambassador Powell about State's efforts to make sure that officers have the needed supervisory skills. I would like you to comment as well on State's supervisory skill training.

Ms. JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. AFSA is very pleased that the department is undertaking a number of new measures

that they are to address the issue of supervisory skills. We have seen in the surveys that we have conducted and in feedback from our members that this has been an area of considerable concern and occasionally complaint. And we have also seen in the grievance area that we deal with and other areas that AFSA operates that people are dissatisfied and sometimes not qualified or haven't been provided the training necessary to be effective supervisors.

So we are very pleased to see that the department is actively seeking to do a better job and to institute new courses, which I hope will be mandatory, for employees who are going out to first-time supervisory jobs, and to pay more attention to this whole issue as people move through the mid-career.

Senator AKAKA. As you both know, much of the training at the posts is on-the-job training, which is an important aspect of training. The Academy recommends that State conduct a study to examine best practices for on-the-job training. My question to both of you is, what recommendations would you give the department regarding carrying out this study?

Mr. NEUMANN. I guess I should start since it was our recommendation.

Senator AKAKA. Ambassador Neumann.

Mr. NEUMANN. Thank you, Senator Akaka. I think, of course, I would look to professional trainers and people who have looked at this kind of issue before to do this sort of study. And anecdotally, we hear things about some people relate much better to Generation X, Generation Y people than others, that there are techniques that convey information better, and others that get people's backs up.

The point of a survey would be to pick up that kind of information, both from those doing on-the-job training and those who receive counseling on the job, what works, what doesn't, to try to compile a sense of best practices. Then to put that into some readily digestible form. As Director Powell noted, all Deputy Chief Missions (DCMs) have this mentoring responsibility. It would be very helpful for people who have newly become DCMs, or maybe not so new, who have this responsibility, to have something to go on beyond completely gut instinct as to what works best in mentoring. They might be able to go through a short, possibly distance learning course in how do you identify different generational types. What kinds of things work best to convey advice so that it is meaningful and useful? That is the kind of thing we are looking at.

Senator AKAKA. Ms. Johnson.

Ms. JOHNSON. Thank you. I would just like to add to the comments of Ambassador Neumann, with which I agree. But from my own experience and what people have said to me, it might be helpful if we could identify what specific skills we want to develop and perfect through this on-the-job training and make that clear upfront, both to the DCM and to the mentors, as well as to the mentees, so you would get a better sense of whether the experiences that the mentor is trying to make sure an employee gets to constitute the sort of on-the-job training are in fact the right ones and which gaps there are.

So I think it would help both parties to have a better sense what specific skills are we trying to develop or improve and perfect through this mentoring.

Mr. NEUMANN. So long as you recognize that some of what you are trying to mentor is not a specific skill, but a sort of general ability to react to problems.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you. Ambassador Neumann, as you pointed out in your testimony, although State has established requirements for promotion to the senior ranks, the Academy reported that it is concerned that officers will be unprepared because the department does not monitor their progress toward meeting the requirements.

My question to you is what steps should the department take to make sure its officers are prepared to enter the senior ranks?

Mr. NEUMANN. Very briefly, so that I do not recapitulate all our recommendations, I think they have done a pretty good job in the Career Development Program of laying out the basic things that are necessary. What is needed now is the how, how are you going to make sure officers get the skills you have already identified, and part of that is informal training, as we have talked about. Part of it is in mentoring.

Part of it will be whether the department has the capacity to actually allow people to take the training which it has identified. The one piece that we have particularly focused on here as well is to look at assignments as being related to training. Right now, decisions are made pretty much exclusively on the short-term needs of the service and the short-term focus of the officer.

We think there ought to be a third piece of that so that the assignments in particular career tracks help officers to develop the skills for the future. That kind of thinking will only be possible if the role of the central personnel system is strengthened in the assignments process. Thank you.

Senator AKAKA. Ambassador Neumann, the Academy's report states that employees of the Office of Career Development and Assignment are not trained to offer career advice or conduct the workforce planning. The report also points out that most of the office's staff are in the Foreign Service, which brings important expertise, but means that people leave after 2 or 3 years' rotations.

You recommend establishing a cadre of 7 to 10 permanent human resource specialists for this office. Would you please elaborate on how this would benefit the service?

Mr. NEUMANN. The office has to maintain, sir, a balance between its various requirements, including needs of the officer, needs of the service. Part of that balance requires that Foreign Service Officers, who actually know what the jobs are overseas and the conditions, remain in charge of the office. I think we would have a serious problem if you ended up with a service in the field being run entirely by people who do not serve in the field.

But there is also a need that my colleagues who worked on this report identified, which I believe in, for a strengthening of the numbers of the permanent staff, that is, the Civil Service staff, to provide the underpinning of continuity and knowledge so that the continuity on the one hand and the foreign experience on the other make a blending in the office to perform a stronger role.

Our estimation was, as you stated. That is our estimation. One could find that it needs a few more or a few less of the permanent cadres as one actually experiments with it. But the notion of the

increase is so that you have enough permanent staff to provide the expanded basis of continuity, which we believe would be useful. Thank you.

Senator AKAKA. In Ambassador Neumann's testimony, he stated that we should train for certainty and educate for uncertainty. He emphasized the importance of intellectual preparation.

The Academy recommends that mid-career officers receive a year of professional education and that it be required for promotion to the senior ranks. Would you please discuss this and the advantages of allowing officers a year of advance study?

Mr. NEUMANN. Certainly. This is, as you know, Senator Akaka, a constant which has been long and well established with our military colleagues. It is exactly this approach that has led to people like General David Petraeus having a doctoral degree from an advanced university.

There is a quality to education, to reflection on broader issues, which you cannot get simply by specific training and I think that is actually a notion which underlies the whole notion of liberal education in universities in America. I can tell you that my own experience of going to the National War College back in 1990, 1991 bore this out.

In an anecdotal fashion I expected to have fun. I had no idea how much I was going to learn and I learned a great deal, not only about how to interoperate with my colleagues in the military, but giving me a chance to step back from the day-to-day pressures of resolving specific things or being trained for specific skills and think about how do you integrate these things more broadly and what are the downsides to any course of action and how do you mitigate the kind of things that senior managers have to think about?

There is a degree to which these will always be a little bit ephemeral. You can always more easily define specific skill sets than what it means to be an educated person and one capable of reflection at senior levels. But I am quite sure working up in this diverse body we call the Congress that you are able to identify both sets of personalities. Thank you.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you, Ambassador. Ms. Johnson, in your testimony, you stated that AFSA would like to see greater recognition of the importance of a common foundation of professional identity, standards, and expectations within the Foreign Service. This may be difficult to develop if training is too focused on narrowly defined technical skills.

Would you please explain the importance of having a clear sense of unity of effort and what steps the department can take to address this?

Ms. JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it has been noted by a number of the witnesses this morning the diversity that is reflected in the Foreign Service of today. We have a very talented group of people from all over the United States and every measure of diversity that you can think of entering our service today and this very varied background I think underscores the need, even the heightened need for trying to develop a common shared foundation for across all of our sort of specializations, cones and other subdivisions that we have.

AFSA conducted a couple of surveys last year to all entry-level and mid-level officers asking them what they thought their profession was, what requirements, were there any core values, was there anything? And the responses that we got were all over the place. It was very evident that there was no unified set of commonly held values or understanding about what the professional requirements were.

We think that these surveys should be followed up on and that the department needs to develop a process that involves both top down and bottom up input into developing this kind of a sort of common culture. I think it once existed in the Foreign Service. It has diminished for a variety of reasons and I think it is very important today, and AFSA believes that this needs to be reestablished and we would look forward to having a role in this process. But it is something that has to be participatory and has to be both top down and bottom up in our view.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you. This is my final question for this panel. What are your top three recommendations for addressing employee training and education at the State Department?

Mr. NEUMANN. My first one—

Senator AKAKA. Ambassador Neumann.

Mr. NEUMANN. Thank you. My first one, Senator Akaka, is the continuation of personnel growth and the second is funding. When we did the report in 2008 that you supported us on, the report on A Foreign Affairs Budget for the Future, you will remember, sir, that we documented a broken diplomacy. Thirty percent of our language-designated positions lacked qualified officers, there were staffing gaps, and so on.

If resources are reduced, if the Foreign Service is cut, as some recommend, then we will go back to a broken diplomacy incapable of meeting the Nation's security demands overseas. I think perhaps I should have said that our first recommendation is that diplomacy as a whole be looked at as a part of national security. If we do not do that, I think the specific recommendations fall.

The second is people. The third is money. Recognizing that there have to be cuts, I would say. Where there are cuts they, in our recommendation, should be heavy on the program side, as painful as some of those will be to their individual program constituencies, because programs can be made up fairly quickly when the economic situation improves.

But problems in the institution take years and years to rectify. The last 2 years you have helped push the funding that has allowed this increase in training positions. But it takes 2 years to train an Arabic-language qualified officer to the same level we train in 6 months in French, and you have to back up from that to, of course, from funding decisions, to the allocation, to the development of programs, to the recruitment of people, to putting them in a program.

So undoing the problems of the past is not something we have accomplished yet. We are on the path to it. If we cease the path we will cease the progress. Thank you very much, sir.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you. Ms. Johnson.

Ms. JOHNSON. I think the first would be a clearer definition of what we are training for, what we really need to be doing. Beyond

the very broad definition that appears, I think, in the State Department's annual training plan today, which talks about the purpose of the department's training, is to develop the men and women our Nation requires to fulfill our leadership role in world affairs and advance and defend United States interests, and that is at a sort of 35,000-foot level.

I think we need a clear definition of what that means operationally in order to get all the training, professional education right and make sure that we are doing the right things in an era of scarce resources.

Second, greater focus on the needs of the institution as opposed to the individual. I have benefited myself from—as an individual, I have loved my career, every bit of it. I am not sure it was always the thing that was in the best interest of the institution.

And more on creating multi-functional officers. I am not sure that we can afford anymore to have specialization, cone-based specialization. I think the more we can encourage multi-functional officers who are multi-capable, the better off we will be.

And then finally, more focus on education that conveys knowledge in addition to the skills that we need to develop as diplomats.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you. This has been helpful to our Committee and I want to say thank you very much for your responses, and I want to thank all of our witnesses today.

It is clear to me that State has made great efforts to equip its workforce to meet 21st Century challenges. However, more work needs to be done. Many of the recommendations discussed today are contingent upon Congress passing an appropriations bill. The Senate currently is considering continuing resolutions for the rest of fiscal year 2011 that would meet House Republicans half way thus far.

I hope we work quickly to finalize these appropriations. I am committed to working with State and stakeholders like the Academy and AFSA to support your efforts to enhance State Department training. Again, I want to say thank you.

The hearing record will be open for 1 week for additional statements or questions other members may have. This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:53 a.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

**STATEMENT
OF
AMBASSADOR NANCY J. POWELL**

**DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE AND
DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES
DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

**BEFORE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF
GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT, THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE,
AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

**HEARING
ON
STATE DEPARTMENT TRAINING: INVESTING IN THE WORKFORCE
TO ADDRESS 21ST CENTURY CHALLENGES**

MARCH 8, 2011

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the State Department's efforts to ensure that our people are trained effectively to address the increasingly complicated and difficult foreign policy challenges of the 21st century. I appreciate your interest in the issues raised by the GAO report we are considering today, "Additional Steps Are Needed to Improve Strategic Planning and Evaluation of Training for State Personnel." We worked closely with the GAO team over a period of almost a year and a half, and we welcome their recommendations.

The State Department carries out U.S. foreign policy priorities in increasingly complex and often perilous environments. The last decade has been marked by a growing number of global threats to our security, including violent extremism, criminal networks trafficking in narcotics and persons, natural disasters, and pandemics. Effectively managing these threats depends on building productive partnerships with other countries to help strengthen their capabilities. We recognize that we must continue to expand our efforts to reach out to influence public opinion and build our diplomatic presence where our interests are most at stake.

In December, the State Department issued the first-ever Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR), which provides a blueprint for elevating American civilian power to better advance our foreign policy interests. This includes, among other things, directing and coordinating the resources of America's civilian agencies to prevent and resolve conflicts. The QDDR also calls on the Department to deploy additional personnel and resources to emerging powers and 21st century centers of global and regional influence, such as Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, Russia, South Africa, and Turkey.

The changing foreign policy environment and our efforts to address it proactively have resulted in an increase in language-designated positions. Proficiency in languages such as Arabic and Chinese is required in greater numbers to conduct outreach to foreign audiences, negotiate and consult with other governments, and effectively assist American citizens at United States' embassies and consulates around the world. An even greater challenge for us is posed by the fact that our personnel are serving in more remote, more dangerous locations. We must ensure that they receive the support and training they need to succeed in these posts, as well as when they move on to their next assignment or return home.

While our mission has grown over the past 10 years, our staffing has not kept pace. This resulted in difficult decisions that often affected training. For example, we sometimes had to choose whether to leave a position empty for the many months it takes to train a fully language-qualified officer or to cut part or all of the language training. With the support of Congress, we launched Diplomacy 3.0 in March 2009, which has enabled us to hire nearly 1,400 Foreign Service employees and increase Civil Service employment by roughly 300 in 2009, with similar levels in 2010. We have also increased the size of our training complement, which will allow the placement of more employees in long-term training with fewer staffing gaps at posts.

We are grateful to Congress for its increased support over the last few years, and I am confident these new resources have set us on the right path to train our employees to address the diplomatic challenges of today and tomorrow.

Meeting our Training Needs

The Bureau of Human Resources (HR) is responsible for the State Department's greatest asset – its personnel – the Civil Service, Foreign Service and Locally Employed Staff who advance the interests of the United States. HR's mission spans the full course of employee services from before employees are hired and continuing to after they have retired. We are responsible for recruiting and hiring new employees; providing benefits, compensation and support for those employees and their families; handling assignments and transfers of Foreign Service employees; coordinating training for employees throughout their careers at the State Department; and maintaining contact with employees after retirement.

HR matches the diverse skills and capabilities of nearly 66,600 American and foreign national employees with positions domestically and at more than 270 posts worldwide to increase the security of our country and advance our foreign policy objectives. We work hand-in-hand with the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) to ensure that the employees of our three different workforces – Civil Service, Foreign Service and Locally Employed Staff – are well-equipped to handle the diverse demands of their jobs.

We have long welcomed GAO's interest in the training and development of our employees, and we appreciate the variety of perspectives with which they have approached the Department's training in their recent reports. For example, a report on inter-agency national security collaboration (GAO-11-108) highlighted State's leadership among civilian agencies in promoting interagency understanding via a myriad of FSI courses, rotations, and temporary assignments. In response to GAO's report on foreign language programs at the Department (GAO-09-955), we developed a strategic language plan as well as a model to help us determine how

best to address the Department's resource needs in language training, which will be the precursor of a second model for overall training.

In its most recent report on training – the subject of today's hearing – GAO recognized the wide variety of training available at FSI and through distance learning that helps provide our people with the knowledge and skills to address today's diplomatic challenges. We are pleased to note that of the 32 attributes of our training programs reviewed by GAO, the vast majority were found to be satisfactory, with only 5 areas in which recommendations for improvement are pending. A sixth recommendation, addressing curriculum design guidance, has already been closed.

I would like to briefly discuss what HR has done to strengthen our training program as a whole. My colleague, FSI Director Dr. Ruth Whiteside will provide greater detail about FSI's programs. Effective training is essential to the success of our people in meeting our foreign policy objectives. We agree with GAO that training programs, whether they be for our Foreign Service employees, our Civil Service employees or our Locally Employed Staff, will not succeed unless we first fully assess our training needs.

To better assess our Foreign Service training needs, HR completed a comprehensive job analysis for Foreign Service Generalists in 2007 and one for Specialists in 2009. FSI used the results of these analyses to modify its course offerings. We have developed the Career Development Program (CDP) for Foreign Service Generalists and Specialists that describes the areas of knowledge, skill, and expertise that Foreign Service employees need throughout their career and to compete for the senior ranks of their disciplines. The CDP provides a

“career roadmap” for all our Foreign Service Officers and Specialists. It also encourages Foreign Service Officers and Specialists to broaden their experience by serving in more than one career track, in more than one region, and at our more difficult posts. Additionally, the CDP requires them to be experienced in crisis management. We are aiming, among other things, to better prepare them for senior positions.

The situation with our Civil Service employees is a bit different. We have well-defined position-based training plans for entry-level employees. Many of our Civil Service employees enter through highly structured federal internship and fellowship programs that have their own training requirements. However, we recognize that training is important throughout each employee’s career. We are developing a formal needs assessment which will allow us to develop strategies to ensure that employees receive the necessary training at the appropriate points in their careers.

For our 43,000 diverse Locally Employed staff in 270 different posts around the world, we require flexibility in assessing needs and planning and administering training, whether taken at FSI or via the myriad of distance learning opportunities. We have increased training for our Locally Employed staff at our regional centers in Frankfurt, Bangkok and other locations. This allows our local colleagues to take many of the same professional courses offered to U.S. staff. Supplementing these routine offerings are professional conferences, workshops, and post-specific in-house training programs to build language, technical, and computer skills.

Another challenge that we face as we bring in large numbers of new Foreign Service and Civil Service Employees is the experience gap within our workforces.

This is an issue that the American Academy of Diplomacy mentions in its recent report on State Department training. Ruth Whiteside and I worked closely with the Academy on the report and welcome their suggestions. Let me outline the problem for you. Approximately 33 percent of Foreign Service employees and 36 percent of Civil Service employees currently have less than five years of experience with the Department, and 61 percent of Foreign Service employees and 59 percent of Civil Service employees have less than 10 years of experience with the Department. This makes effective training critical, but we also recognize that training alone is not enough to compensate for the experience gap, which is why we have developed formal and informal mentoring programs to help guide these new employees so they can be successful. We also emphasize to our senior Foreign Service and Civil Service employees the importance of mentoring and providing “on the job training” to their employees.

Meeting our Foreign Language Needs

I want to take a minute to touch on another training issue that I know is of interest to you, Senator Akaka – strengthening the foreign-language capabilities of the State Department. Foreign language skills are not optional for the State Department. Foreign Service officers must possess foreign language proficiency to safeguard American citizens, to prevent and respond to crises, to engage local population on issues such as human rights, and to negotiate agreements with foreign governments in support of our foreign policy goals.

However, foreign language ability is just one of many skills that we expect in our Foreign Service personnel. In addition, employees must also have leadership, managerial, analytical and communication skills, and substantive knowledge of

their jobs. We must balance language training with the need to develop other skills and also keep in mind resource constraints.

To define our language needs and priorities and the best way to meet them, we have recently completed a strategic plan for foreign languages. Foreign-language capabilities are central to achieving our nation's foreign policy goals. Strong language skills help our employees establish trust with foreign interlocutors and advocate effectively for U.S. policies. The language strategy also aligns our tools—recruitment, incentives, career requirements, assignments policies, staffing, and training—to ensure that we have language-capable employees equipped to advance, protect and defend U.S. interests.

Sustaining the Department's high standards for foreign language capability has become increasingly challenging. We are encouraging our employees to enhance their skills in languages, such as Arabic and Chinese, which require at least two years of study to achieve a minimum professional level of proficiency. We have also increased the number of language-designated positions by 42 percent since 2002.

In recent years, FSI has expanded its language training capacity. The number of students enrolled in full-time Arabic language courses, for example, has dramatically increased since 2004. FSI, which is running a two-shift schedule, also uses overseas immersion opportunities to supplement classroom training, and is expanding online offerings. In addition, recruiting and targeting candidates with strong language skills has helped us fill our language-designated positions.

Conclusion

With the news highlighting how our world is changing and increasing the complexities of the State Department's mission, it is highly appropriate that we are talking about training today. Our people are our greatest asset, and we must ensure that they are fully equipped to handle not only today's challenges but are prepared to meet tomorrow's as well. Mr. Chairman, I thank you for the opportunity to address you today and I would be happy to answer your questions.

**STATEMENT
OF
RUTH A. WHITESIDE**

**DIRECTOR OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

**BEFORE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF
GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT, THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE,
AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

**HEARING
ON
STATE DEPARTMENT TRAINING: INVESTING IN THE WORKFORCE
TO ADDRESS 21ST CENTURY CHALLENGES**

MARCH 8, 2011

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today to address the Department of State's training programs. As the Director General mentioned, we appreciate your continued interest in these issues, and are pleased that the GAO found that the Department is meeting 26 of the 32 attributes used to assess federal strategic training and development efforts. We welcome the GAO's recommendations in those areas where we can strengthen our actions; as an example of our commitment, I note that we have already closed out one recommendation – on curriculum design guidance.

The Foreign Service Institute – FSI for short – is the Department's principal training arm. We provide career-long training programs for the Department's personnel. Our programs include over 600 classroom courses and over 200 in-house developed distance learning courses. These start with orientation for both employees and family members, and include progressively advanced tradecraft, leadership, and language training for staff as they take on new assignments and progress through their careers. Tradecraft training provides our workforce with the tools to effectively perform their jobs at home and abroad – and covers disciplines as diverse as management, consular, public diplomacy, political and economic reporting, and information technology and office management. Beyond these traditional areas, we also provide training in stability operations for those destined for our most challenging assignments, in area studies, and in cross-functional disciplines such as international negotiations, program management, and strategic planning. Foreign language instruction is critical to our diplomats' ability to communicate America's message to foreign audiences and engage with both governments and local populations; we provide instruction ranging from six months to up to two years in some 70 languages. Leadership training is also an important focus at all levels, starting with entry-level Civil and Foreign Service

staff, up to Ambassadors and Senior Foreign Service and Senior Executive Service principals. And in our transition programs, we recognize that a foreign affairs career is, almost by definition, a mobile one that will have many turning points. Here we aim to give employees – and their family members as well, who are partners on the journey – tools that help them anticipate and cope with the issues they face, ranging from security in dangerous overseas environments, to raising resilient foreign service children, to returning from high-stress assignments.

FSI's curriculum is geared to support the entire country team that represents the United States in our missions abroad, and our training audience includes students from over 47 federal agencies and the military service branches. We also harness the expertise of external sources such as the General Services Administration, the Defense Acquisitions University, the Graduate School and other vendors to bring in or purchase training that is beyond the foreign affairs sphere but very pertinent to the work State personnel do – for example, government-wide human resources, acquisitions, or federal budgeting.

We face many challenges in providing training for today's complex foreign affairs environment. Under the Secretary's Diplomacy 3.0 initiative, which the Director General has already discussed, we have increased training enrollments for State personnel over 50% from pre-Diplomacy 3.0 levels. Another important area of focus recently has been the development of our Stability Operations curriculum, which supports the growing deployment of personnel to Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Sudan, and other critical areas of instability. This includes the Interagency Integrated Civilian-Military Training Exercise for Afghanistan conducted with DoD partners at the Muscatatuck Urban Training Center in Butlerville, Indiana. We heeded the call from Congress, the GAO and others to

strengthen interagency coordination and created programs such as the National Security Executive Leadership Seminar, a 10 day seminar conducted over five months for rising interagency leaders at the GS-15/FS-01/06 level.

A continuing challenge is the need to train a workforce that is deployed worldwide. We are proud to be leaders in the area of computer based distance learning (DL), which makes it possible to provide training 24/7 anywhere in the world with access to the internet. Ten years ago, FSI had only ten of our courses available by distance learning. Today, we have over 200 courses on subjects ranging from foreign languages, to tradecraft, to the basics of reconstruction and stabilization. Our expertise in DL allows us to quickly respond to emerging requirements for world-wide training, such as on the NO FEAR Act. Because we created a DL course and rolled it out quickly to our global workforce, State was one of the first cabinet level agencies to substantially meet the NO FEAR Act training requirement. We also provide a commercial library of DL courseware on a variety of workplace skills such as IT, communication, and effective supervision. We have also been working to increase opportunities for training in the field. We have developed agreements with regional centers in Florida, Frankfurt, and Bangkok to provide forward-deployed training either through visiting FSI staff or certified adjunct faculty.

FSI works closely with HR and other bureaus in the Department to ensure that our training is meeting the Department's needs and anticipating future requirements. This collaboration may take the form of comprehensive studies. The Director General has mentioned the comprehensive job analyses HR conducted for FS Generalists and Specialists in 2007 and 2009, the results of which we used to ensure the timeliness of our course offerings and reflect training needs, and the

recently published American Academy of Diplomacy report on “Forging a 21st-Century Diplomatic Service for the U.S. through Professional and Education and Training.” These inform our planning for training and employee development. Beyond this kind of formal analysis, FSI also constantly engages with stakeholders in the Department and elsewhere to update course material and create new courses where necessary. For example, last year, we successfully piloted new courses on promoting human rights and democracy, on supervisory and leadership skills for entry-level staff, and on understanding the interagency for mid-level employees. The release of the QDDR report presents another opportunity for self-assessment, and we are currently conducting in-depth curriculum reviews in several areas highlighted by the QDDR, such as Development and Diplomacy and Interagency Agility.

Regarding training performance measures, I note that the performance measures FSI has been using were developed a few years ago under our participation in the previous Administration’s Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) process. However, it is timely for us to review our training related performance measures and we will do so during the upcoming Bureau Strategic and Resource Plan cycle. As the GAO noted, over time linkages to strategic planning for training and development have lessened in the agency’s planning processes. In addition to looking at our own bureau strategic plans coming up, the Director General and I will discuss with the Under Secretary for Management the possibilities for including linkages to training and employee development in the overall strategic planning process.

In terms of reviewing the impact of our individual courses, FSI has been expanding use of what (under the Kirkpatrick system) are termed “Level 3” evaluations, i.e.,

impact of the training in the workplace once the student has returned to the job. Further, fueled by the QDDR report, we have formed an internal working group which is examining FSI's training evaluation activities, and making recommendations for further improvements.

In terms of data collection and analysis we believe that we are already collecting much of the data the GAO recommends through the Department's corporate systems, the Global Employee Management System (GEMS) and Student Training Management System (STMS). Through HR's data warehouse known as the Knowledge Center we think there is some existing capacity for bureau training officers to generate reports to result in data usable for analysis. HR and FSI will continue to explore ways to make bureau Executive Directors more aware of the availability and utility of Knowledge Center data. However, more sophisticated reports generation may require additional programming and program enhancement to the GEMS and STMS applications which would depend on resource availability.

CONCLUSION

The men and women of the Department's Civil Service, Foreign Service, and Locally Employed Staff workforce are a vital national resource. They have chosen the path of public service and are doing tough jobs, often in rough locales and at great personal risk. They deserve the best preparation we can provide to do their jobs at the high level they aspire to achieve, and to help them develop into our potential future leaders. Especially in an era of tight budgets, training is critical to ensure that our employees are performing their work with maximum efficiency and the ability to rapidly adapt. Speaking for FSI, and I know Director General Powell will concur, we are proud of what we have been able to do for the Department,

including increasing training opportunities through distance learning and other creative delivery methods. We believe our curriculum helped the Department earn a top-five ranking among large agencies as a “best place to work” in the most recent employee survey conducted by the Partnership for Public Service.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for the opportunity to address you and the Subcommittee today. Along with the Director General, I would be happy to answer your questions.

GAO

United States Government Accountability Office**Testimony**

Before the Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

For Release on Delivery
Expected at 10:00 a.m. EST
Tuesday, March 8, 2011

DEPARTMENT OF STATE**Additional Steps Are
Needed to Improve
Strategic Planning and
Evaluation of Training for
State Personnel**

Statement of Jess T. Ford, Director
International Affairs and Trade



GAO-11-438T

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to be here today to discuss the U.S. Department of State's (State) efforts to train its personnel. My testimony is based on our report, which is being released today.¹ Because State is the lead U.S. foreign affairs agency, its personnel require certain knowledge, skills, and abilities to equip them to address the global security threats and challenges facing the United States—including the threat of Al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations, HIV/AIDS and other pandemics, environmental degradation, nuclear proliferation, and failed states. In fiscal years 2006 through 2010, State's funding for training personnel grew by about 62 percent, and the department requested more than \$266 million in fiscal year 2011 for programs providing training in professional skills such as foreign language proficiency, area studies, information technology, consular duties, and others needed for the conduct of foreign relations.² State's Foreign Service Institute (FSI) is the primary training provider for the department's more than 66,000 Foreign Service, civil service, and locally employed staff worldwide.³

Our prior work has identified staffing and foreign language shortfalls at State, including challenges the department has faced in filling positions at the mid-level in particular, and in attracting qualified personnel for some hardship posts.⁴ The department is currently in the midst of what it has called the most challenging military-to-civilian transition in U.S. history in Iraq, one of the posts of greatest hardship where State personnel serve. Recent departmental initiatives—in particular, "Diplomacy 3.0," a multiyear effort launched in March 2009 with a primary aim of increasing the size of State's Foreign Service by 25 percent and the civil service by 13 percent—have underscored the importance of training to equip personnel

¹GAO, State Department: *Additional Steps Are Needed to Improve Strategic Planning and Evaluation of Training for State Personnel*, GAO-11-241 (Washington, D.C.: January 2011).

²According to State, the total number of Foreign Service, civil service, and locally employed personnel increased from about 57,000 in September 2006 to more than 66,000 as of September 2010, an increase of about 17 percent.

³State's locally employed staff include foreign nationals and U.S. citizen residents employed via direct-hire appointments, personal services agreements, or personal services contracts.

⁴See GAO, State Department: *Persistent Staffing and Foreign Language Gaps Compromise Diplomatic Readiness*, GAO-09-1046T (Washington, D.C.: September 24, 2009); and State Department: *Staffing and Foreign Language Shortfalls Persist Despite Initiatives to Address Gaps*, GAO-07-1154T (Washington, D.C.: August 1, 2007).

to fulfill State's leadership role in world affairs and to advance and defend U.S. interests abroad.

Today I will discuss State's purpose and structure for training personnel, including leadership, management, professional, and area studies training, contributing to diplomatic readiness of State's Foreign Service and civil service personnel and locally employed staff overseas. I will also discuss the extent to which State's personnel training incorporates elements of effective federal training programs.⁵

Over the course of our work on this issue, we reviewed and analyzed data and documentation related to State's training efforts, such as strategic and workforce planning documents, funding data, and data on personnel participation in training, as well as legislative, regulatory, and State policy and procedural criteria relevant to training. In addition, we reviewed training evaluation mechanisms used by FSI. We interviewed key officials from 26 State bureaus and offices in Washington, D.C., including FSI, the Bureau of Human Resources, and the six geographic bureaus. We also conducted semistructured telephone interviews with State officials with training-related responsibilities at 12 overseas missions, and interviewed officials from State's regional training centers located in Bangkok, Thailand; Ft. Lauderdale, Florida; and Frankfurt, Germany. With input from State, we completed a training assessment to determine the extent to which the department's personnel training incorporates elements of effective training programs. We used the results of this assessment to identify any gaps in State's training based on criteria identified in GAO, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), State, and other legislative and regulatory guidance and policy. In addition, in light of work that we recently published on shortfalls in State personnel's foreign language

⁵We previously developed guidance for assessing federal strategic training and development efforts, including identifying four essential and interrelated elements of the training and development process: (1) planning, (2) design, (3) implementation, and (4) evaluation. The guidance includes key attributes of effective federal training programs to consider when assessing each of the four elements, along with indicators related to each attribute. This guidance can be used to identify potential gaps or areas where improvements may be made to help ensure that training and development investments are targeted strategically and not wasted on efforts that are irrelevant, duplicative, or ineffective. GAO, *Human Capital: A Guide for Assessing Strategic Training and Development Efforts in the Federal Government*, GAO-04-546G (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 1, 2004).

skills,⁶ we did not focus on language training. We also did not include within our scope an assessment of “hard skills” (e.g., security and law enforcement) training provided by State’s Bureau of Diplomatic Security. We conducted this performance audit from July 2009 to January 2011 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. More information on our scope and methodology and detailed findings is available in the full report.⁷

In brief, Mr. Chairman, we found that State has taken many steps to incorporate the interrelated elements of an effective training program—planning, design, implementation, and evaluation—into its training for personnel,⁸ but the department’s strategic approach to workforce training could be improved in several key areas. Specifically, we identified five areas where State can improve its training. First, State lacks a comprehensive training needs assessment process incorporating all bureaus and posts. Second, State developed guidance for employees about training opportunities, career paths, and how training can help employees attain career goals, but the guidance does not provide complete and accurate information. Third, State lacks a data collection and analysis plan for evaluating training, and thus cannot be assured that proper practices and procedures are systematically and comprehensively applied. Fourth, State could not sufficiently demonstrate consistent and appropriate support for training, because the department does not track detailed information on training cost and delivery that would allow for an analysis and comparison of employees in different groups, bureaus, regions, or posts. Lastly, State performance measures for training generally do not fully address training goals, and are generally output-rather than outcome-oriented.

⁶GAO, *Department of State: Comprehensive Plan Needed to Address Persistent Foreign Language Shortfalls*, GAO-09-955 (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 17, 2009). Our latest report notes that according to State, the department has taken several steps to address prior GAO recommendations related to language training needs and challenges, such as developing an analytical model to better assess resource needs, including training, to meet language requirements, and implementing mechanisms to ensure a strategic approach to addressing foreign language needs.

⁷GAO-11-241.

⁸GAO-04-546G.

State's Annual Training Plan states that "the purpose of the department's training program is to develop the men and women our nation requires to fulfill our leadership role in world affairs and to advance and defend U.S. interests." FSI is State's primary training provider, offering entry-, mid-, and senior-level training for employees as they progress through their careers. State guidance outlines key training roles, including FSI's primary role in developing training policies and facilitating necessary training, and the Bureau of Human Resource's role in assigning employees to training and working with FSI to help ensure it meets their needs. Other bureaus, offices, and posts also share responsibilities for training. FSI offers over 700 classroom courses, and has recently increased its focus on distance learning. We found that overall, about 40 percent of personnel training over the last 5 fiscal years, on average, was in foreign language skills. Other training for personnel generally focused on developing leadership, management, and other professional and technical skills and knowledge.

State's personnel training reflects numerous aspects of effective training programs, based on our assessment using the criteria GAO previously identified. For example, State maintains a workforce training plan, as required by federal regulations.⁵ FSI leads efforts to prepare the plan annually; the plan is linked to State's overall strategic plan, and presents a business case for proposed training investments. FSI also publishes an annual schedule of courses, which provides information for employees on FSI classroom and distance learning course offerings. The schedule of courses generally includes information for each course such as a brief description, any prerequisites, course objectives, and relevant competencies. As another example of a positive practice, State has made an effort to use advances in technologies to enhance training efforts. The number of distance learning offerings, as well as employee participation in distance learning, has increased in recent years. For example, State's latest annual training plan reported that FSI developed 20 new custom distance learning courses during the prior year, and data showed time spent by personnel completing distance learning courses more than doubled from fiscal years 2006 through 2009—from about 113,000 hours in fiscal year 2006 to about 254,000 in fiscal year 2009. In addition, we found that State has a range of training evaluation mechanisms in place, including mid- and post-training course evaluations. Since 2006, FSI has conducted an annual

⁵ 5 C.F.R. § 410.201.

training survey. FSI reported most respondents to the 2010 survey were, in general, satisfied or very satisfied with training.¹⁰

However, although State has developed an extensive program for training personnel, our analysis found several gaps in the department's efforts to strategically plan and prioritize training, ensure efficient and effective training design and delivery, and determine whether or how training and development efforts contribute to improved performance and desired results. Each of the issue areas we identified broadly relates to multiple elements, attributes, and indicators throughout the interrelated training and development process. While an agency's training program is not necessarily expected to address every indicator identified in the GAO guidance, based on our assessment, we identified strategic weaknesses related to these areas as particularly important to ensuring effective planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of personnel training.

For example, we found that

- State lacks a systematic, comprehensive training needs assessment process incorporating all bureaus and overseas posts. Since 2007, State human resource reports noted that bureaus have not formally conducted annual training needs assessments, and identified this as an issue that should be addressed to help provide a realistic basis for planning, budgeting, and directing training. According to the reports, the Bureau of Human Resources intended to form an interoffice working group to develop a comprehensive plan and implementation guidance to support a department-wide effort for assessing training needs. However, State had not yet formed an interoffice working group as of November 2010.
- State developed guidance—known as training continuums—to provide information for employees about training opportunities, career ladders and paths, and how training can help employees attain career goals, but the guidance documents do not provide complete and accurate information for employees. While the documents state that they were designed to provide a broad overview of appropriate training that should be considered as employees plan their careers in the department, including information on mandatory, recommended, and suggested

¹⁰ According to State, the 2010 annual training survey was sent to a random sample of 5,105 Foreign Service and civil service employees, as well as eligible family members. Among other things, the survey asked respondents to rate FSI's training delivery methods, training programs, and customer service. We determined that the results of this survey were sufficiently reliable to provide a general indication of employee satisfaction with training.

courses, we found issues that raised questions about their usefulness and reliability as employee resources. For example, we found that specific training requirements designated by bureaus and posts for certain groups of employees are not always identified in the training guidance. A key official from FSI's executive office acknowledged that the guidance documents do not include complete and accurate information for employees on training, and noted that the documents have not been reviewed to ensure they uniformly reflect departmental policies or standards.

- State has not developed a data collection and analysis plan for evaluating training, which could help ensure that appropriate procedures and criteria for evaluating training are systematically applied across the board. As a result, it is not clear whether or how State systematically makes decisions regarding how training programs will be evaluated using different methods or tools, or how results will be used. Our prior work highlights the importance of planning and conducting evaluations of the effectiveness of training and development efforts and notes that a data collection and analysis plan can set priorities for evaluations and systematically cover the methods, timing, and responsibilities for an agency's data collection.¹¹ While State has implemented mechanisms to evaluate training, including course evaluations and an annual training survey, these mechanisms do not fully incorporate locally employed staff, and primarily focus on participant satisfaction or reaction to training, rather than desired results, such as improved quality or efficiency of work.
- State could not sufficiently demonstrate consistent and appropriate support for training, because it does not track detailed data and information on training cost and delivery that would allow for an analysis and comparison of employees in different employee groups, bureaus, regions, and posts. For example, State could not provide data on the percentage of foreign affairs or political officers that had completed required, recommended, or suggested training for their areas of work. Although State tracks some data related to training funding and delivery, the department does not have sufficient information that could be used to ensure consistent and appropriate support for training, or to help

¹¹Such a plan could also include guidelines to help ensure the agency makes an ongoing effort to improve the quality and breadth of data gathered. Our prior work also noted that developing and using such a plan can guide an agency in a systematic approach to assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of both specific training and development programs and more comprehensively assessing its entire training and development effort. GAO-04-546G.

determine whether managers and employees have needed training tools and resources. This is especially important given evidence of variances in training across the department. For example, while training officials we interviewed at some bureaus and posts indicated they had sufficient funding and support for training, others noted they faced significant resource challenges that impacted the ability of employees to get necessary training.

- State has developed several training-related goals and measures, but the measures do not fully address the goals, and are generally output rather than outcome oriented. As a result, they do not provide a clear means of determining whether State's training efforts achieve desired results. For example, one training goal listed in FSI's fiscal year 2012 strategic resource plan, "workforce meets priority diplomatic and operational requirements as a result of FSI training," includes priorities and objectives to expand and enhance language training, support training in stability operations, support new hire training, and enhance public diplomacy training. However, the goal's two measures, "language training success rate at FSI," and "development of training continuum to support State's Office of Reconstruction and Stabilization," are both output measures and do not fully address the priority areas for the goal, such as support for new hire training or public diplomacy training.

State's budget and focus on training have increased in recent years, but the department has also faced, and will likely continue to face, fluctuating and constrained resources and competing priorities when determining what training is critical to its mission. Without concerted efforts to further incorporate effective practices, State cannot ensure training resources are targeted strategically, are not wasted, and achieve cost-effective and timely results desired, and thus cannot be assured that its employees are trained and equipped to meet the challenges of their mission.

Our report being issued today includes several recommendations for the Secretary of State to improve strategic planning and evaluation of the department's efforts to train personnel, including for improvements to State's efforts to assess training needs and efforts to ensure training achieves desired results. State generally agreed with our findings and recommendations.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared statement. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you or other Members of the Subcommittee may have at this time.

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For questions regarding this testimony, please contact Jess T. Ford, (202)512-4268 or fordj@gao.gov. In addition to the contact named above, Anthony Moran, Assistant Director; Lisa Helmer; Shirley Min; Joe Carney; Virginia Chanley; Kieran Cusack; David Dayton; Patrick Lockett; Reid Lowe; and Mary Moutsos provided significant contributions to the work. Contact points for our offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this testimony.

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State Department Training: Investing in the Workforce to Address 21st Century
Challenges
Testimony

Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce
and the District of Columbia

By
Ambassador Ronald E. Neumann (ret)

Chairman Akaka, Senator Johnson, as demonstrations sweep across the Arab world we have seen exemplary performance by Foreign Service Officers taking risks to protect American citizens and report on developments. Yet despite the work of a number of superbly qualified Arabic speaking officers our government lacks sufficient trained Arabic-language speaking officers to fully understand and assess what is happening -- to go beyond the glib, English-speaking reporters in Tahrir Square to take the full measure of what Islamists, young people, the demonstrators and the jobless are saying off camera. We lack these capacities because for years the Department of State has lacked the resources to train enough officers in language skills. The Director General, Ambassador Powell and Foreign Service Institute Director, Dr. Whiteside are making progress in addressing the problem, but it will be years before they can compensate for the mistakes of the past.

This is a microcosm of the training problem that you on this committee and your colleagues are going to make worse or better in the budgets of this and the next few years. We hope you will improve a situation that former National Security Advisor General Brent Scowcroft as urgently needing attention.

The American Academy of Diplomacy, an expert, non-partisan organization of retired senior diplomats, has just released a study of training and education

necessary for our diplomats to meet these new challenges, *Forging a 21st –Century Diplomatic Service for the United States through Professional Education and Training*. The study found serious problems and makes specific recommendations. It builds on our earlier study of overall staffing, *A Foreign Affairs Budget for the Future* (FAB). Like that study, this one was generously supported by the Una Chapman Cox Foundation along with support from the American Foreign Service Association, the Delavan Foundation, and our own resources. Ambassador Robert M. Beecroft chaired the project and the Academy's Chairman, former Undersecretary Thomas Pickering, headed the distinguished advisory panel. I have to pay a special thanks to State's Director General, Ambassador Nancy Powell, and the director of the Foreign Service Institute, Dr. Ruth Whiteside. Without their cooperation and provision of information and the extensive work of their deputies and staff our work could not have been done. However, the conclusions are our own for which we alone are responsible.

Since you have before you the recent GAO report on training I should note that the GAO recommendations and ours are different but mutually reinforcing. The GAO report focuses particularly on evaluating training, measuring outputs rather than inputs, the need for better Career Development Officer (CDO) support to officers and deficiencies in the Individual Development Planning (IDP) process. The last two points dovetail very well with our emphasis on strengthening the central personnel system to make more formal and better use of the standards for promotion known as the Career Development Program (CPD).

Let me highlight our most important issues and recommendations. The core of the report consists of eight specific recommendations that focus on the need to redress America's chronic under-investment in diplomacy and strengthen and expand the

State Department's professional development process. The first three recommendations focus on the resources and chronic under-investment issue and get at the long-term commitment to investing in professional education and training

This is all about the need for personnel. With Congressional support, the State Department has made serious progress in rectifying the problems we identified in our FAB report in 2008. However, that process is not complete. Several hundred positions are needed still for training alone. The Department still lacks an adequate number of positions for what the military calls a training and transfer reserve or "float." Although it has considerably expanded the positions for language training it has not been able to do the same thing for critical training in leadership and other key skills for the current foreign affairs environment.

The Department cannot move essential training to mandatory requirements until it has sufficient personnel to both staff essential work and put officers in training. Until an adequate training reserve is created, all the recommendations of ours, yours or the Secretary of State's are meaningless—they cannot be implemented without sufficient personnel and funding.

We are under no illusions that acquiring and maintaining such resources in the current budget climate will be extraordinarily difficult. Yet if we are not to have a second rate diplomacy incapable of meeting the nation's goals the fight must be waged. If there are not more people to train, then those we have will find that they must remain in critical jobs and they will not be available for training.

Secondly, and intertwined with the need for staff, the personnel system must take more responsibility for ensuring that officers actually take the training they need. You might think that the words "mandatory" and "required" are synonyms. Not in

the Department of State when it comes to training. “Mandatory” means, no kidding, you have to do it. “Required” means you should do it, but because we need you elsewhere you can get a waiver and skip it. And too much of the training officers need is “required,” which means it really isn’t.

This needs to change. The system already in place to do this, the Career Development Program (CPD), needs to be strengthened. That system, the CPD, lists essential wickets that officers must pass through for promotion. But it leaves these steps entirely to the officer. Nor is it yet clear that the personnel system will be able or willing to enforce its own rules. We think it should. For this to happen there must be a re-balancing of forces; enough bodies to train, stringent requirements for certain types of training, and a clear enough linkage between training and promotion to break a Foreign Service culture of resisting training; a culture the nation should no longer afford. We recognize that such change must come in tandem with the resources to implement them but come they should.

Our goal is an integration of resources and authorities to arrive at a situation where, in most cases, officers must take the training they require before getting to relevant jobs. I want to underline that this seemingly simple proposition—proper training before doing the job—is not happening now and will not under current congressional or Administration funding proposals.

The next two recommendations are the most far reaching in the study. The first deals with strengthening the personnel system. That may strike some as only bureaucratic tinkering. It is not. Our contention is that to have a properly trained staff some assignments need to be related to a long term view of essential training. For this to happen we want to break certain cherished traditions. One of these is the short term focus on assignments that considers only the immediate needs of the

Service and the preference of the officer. This does not adequately serve the national interest in a fully trained professional corps. Integrating assignments into how we produce experienced officers would significantly strengthen the Service. We recommend that the personnel system be reinforced with staff and authority to play a more central role in coupling assignments to long term professional development.

The following recommendation changes focus from training to education. Foreign Service Officers, like their military counterparts and other serious professions, need intellectual preparation for the much broader responsibilities that come with seniority. This is recognized in a notion of our military colleagues that they “train for certainty and educate for uncertainty.” The utility of education, not just training, is born out overwhelmingly by the experience of those who have had such opportunities from the now discontinued senior seminar, through the war colleges, to university training. We believe the goal must be to give every mid-level officer a year of professional education; not just a pastiche of short training courses jammed into already crowded professional lives. Education must involve a more serious commitment to reflection and thought. We recommend that, eventually, such a year of advanced study, relevant to their career tracks, become a firm condition for promotion to senior ranks.

Accordingly, one of our most far-reaching recommendations is to institute a full year of professional education for all middle grade officers. We know it cannot be done immediately. Therefore we recommend that there be a growing cascade of officers assigned to a year of professional education at war colleges and universities until we reach the point at which everyone can participate. Resources permitting, State might re-examine the utility of something like the old senior

seminar in the hope that State would someday carry its own weight in the area of professional education as FSI now does in training. Until such time as State can join the military in sharing the burden of educating government employees with international responsibility for the task of operating jointly with the so-called "whole of government" approach, we seek to expand the use of military and other outside sources to provide the broad education we believe essential for the senior diplomats of the future.

In this connection, I want to say that while we are generally and strongly supportive of the Administration's budget and management of the Department of State, to hire only at attrition is a mistake. If we cannot hire 100 over attrition, then let it be 50, or 20 or even ten -- but do not lose the direction, and with it the goal of an effective diplomacy.

There are many additional recommendations that return to the focus on training that I will cover only briefly here. We recommend establishing a temporary corps of roving counselors, drawn extensively from among recently retired FSOs. This is to respond to problems that the mid-level gap has caused for mentoring. With two thirds of FSO having less than ten years in the Service there must be more attention to mentoring. The Director General is moving ahead with a similar program. We strongly endorse this.

Whatever changes we or others recommend, on-the-job training will remain a fact of life. But why should we go on assuming that every officer knows how best to motivate another generation or is God's gift to instruction? We recommend conducting a study to examine best practices in on-the-job training. Such a study should then lead to institutionalizing best practices and training the mentors in how better to convey the fruits of their own experience to their subordinates.

We have also looked at better ways to train senior officers. Because the Foreign Service is small and the best senior officers are in such high demand for the most important jobs it is unrealistic to think that there can be extensive training once officers reach the most senior ranks. That is why we push for more and better professional education at the mid-grades with how we do on-the-job training and mentoring, which will always be part of our life as diplomats. Nevertheless, improvements are possible.

The experience of our large group of former chiefs of missions is that few country directorates have an adequate knowledge of how to most efficiently prepare a new ambassador to go to his post. Too much time is wasted while the new COM designs his or her own consultation. A short training course, very short and one which could be done by distance learning would ensure that bureau personnel are fully prepared to assist new Chiefs of Mission in identifying major policy issues and arranging for appropriate consultations.

And finally, since we are going to continue entrusting high office to those from outside the profession, why handicap them by throwing them into senior positions like assistant secretaries without a clue as to the bureaucratic or professional culture they must lead and function in? The habit of appointing outsiders to senior positions without training unfairly handicaps the appointees and wastes time while they learn how to lead effectively in the institution (the State Department) to which they are appointed. Accordingly, we recommend developing a familiarization course for new non-career officials, focusing on the structure and procedures of the Department, the interagency process, and Washington power relationships. We believe that non-career appointees should, whenever possible, complete such a

course before taking up their positions, if domestic, or abroad, before proceeding to the current course for new ambassadors.

Our report focused on the Foreign Service because that is where the competence of the Academy is strongest. However, we recognize that our partners in the business of diplomacy in AID, Commerce and Agriculture have similar needs for expanded training. We strongly support similar reviews of the need for training in these other agencies.

Sir, while our report is broad in scope I believe implementing our recommendations is essential to building a diplomatic service that can meet the needs of our nation in the coming years. I hope the committee will give all these recommendations due consideration.

Chairman Akaka, Senator Johnson, in closing, we recognize that we are in a difficult budgetary time. Nevertheless, let me leave you with one rather shocking figure and a final thought. The statistic is that right now, today, two-thirds of U.S. Foreign Service Officers have less than ten years of service. Let me repeat that: two-thirds of our diplomats have less than ten years of experience. We cannot afford to leave their "training" to mistakes made on the way to experience.

Not building our professional staff is akin to leaving maintenance of facilities undone. In the end, it costs more in time and in money to repair the damage. I hope that as cuts are examined, the Congress will recognize that diplomacy is an essential element of national security, and by far the cheapest part in lives and dollars. Yet to the extent that cuts must be made, let them be made in programs rather than in personnel. I assure you the results over time will be to our country's benefit.

Thank you for your attention and I am ready to answer your questions.



Testimony of Susan Rockwell Johnson
President, American Foreign Service Association

Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce,
and the District of Columbia
Chairman Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI)

Hearing on:
*State Department Training: Investing in the Workforce to Address 21st Century
Challenges*
March 8, 2011

Mr. Chairman, Senator Johnson, and distinguished subcommittee members, the American Foreign Service Association welcomes the opportunity to speak before this subcommittee on the subject of State Department training and, more generally -- as the just-released American Academy of Diplomacy study has called for -- on professional education and formation. Substantial political, economic, strategic and cultural challenges confront the entire Foreign Service that AFSA is proud to represent, which encompasses employees not only of the State Department, but also of the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Foreign Commercial Service, the Foreign Agricultural Service and the International Broadcasting Bureau. We are grateful to you for again convening a hearing on this important issue.

The question of professional education and training for 21st-century diplomacy and development goes to the heart of our national security readiness and competitiveness. Building a strong, professional diplomatic service is our first line of defense in an increasingly complex, unpredictable and dangerous world. In this regard, diplomacy and development are key instruments of our national power and

should be our primary tools for advancing U.S. interests in the context of understanding, anticipating, containing and addressing tension, instability and conflict. Diplomacy may not always be sufficient, and it always benefits from being backed up by military power. However, experience shows alternatives to diplomacy, including military intervention, are considerably more costly and complicated to implement. They are also less likely to succeed, especially as the competitive forces in the world become ever more capable.

Recent events in North Africa and the Middle East demonstrate how precarious the task of interpreting the meaning of trends and developments for our national interest can be without deep understanding of the subtle forces behind the headlines. More than ever, we need a strong diplomatic service of highly trained professionals with a range of knowledge, skills and abilities founded on a strong grasp of American history, culture and governmental processes. To this must be added foreign language proficiency, advanced area knowledge of the history, culture, politics and economics of other nations, as well as interagency leadership, management, negotiating, public diplomacy, and job-specific functional expertise. This is the minimum all officers must embody in order to provide the best possible timely advice to the president, Secretary of State and our political leadership.

For this reason, since becoming AFSA president nearly two years ago, one of my priorities has been to strengthen AFSA as a professional organization and to focus attention on how much has changed in the Foreign Service and the world since the last Foreign Service Act was passed in 1980. I am trying to engage everyone in the process of addressing how the Department of State and the Foreign Service as institutions need to respond to these changes.

In addition, AFSA's more than 11,000 active-duty members represent a much broader and more diverse range of concerns and aspirations than when I entered the Service in 1980. One of my goals is to help ensure that the institutional environment in which our next generation of diplomats works stays attuned and responsive to both the enduring and the new demands of their chosen profession. Of foremost importance are the issues of professional education and short-term training.

We therefore welcome this timely hearing on this important issue for our nation's diplomatic service and look forward to a similar focus on our development service, USAID. We agree with the recommendations of the January 2011 Government Accountability Office report on training for State Department personnel and stand ready to support the efforts of State Department management to implement them.

AFSA also warmly welcomes the Academy of American Diplomacy's comprehensive study on "Forging a 21st-Century Diplomatic Service for the United States through Professional Education and Training." As General Brent Scowcroft writes in the foreword to the report, it "puts into stark relief the urgent need to prepare and sustain a corps of American diplomatic professionals that is intellectually and operationally ready to lead in the new environment."

The study draws welcome attention to the importance of professional education and formation and shorter-term training. It signals the need to respond to the changing requirements of the U.S. government in the conduct of its foreign and national security policies, including in the area of ensuring cohesion in today's highly diverse Foreign Service through a common, well-defined understanding of and ability to meet the demands of a whole-of-government approach to 21st-century diplomacy and development.

That said, the report could not address all the issues of concern or interest to AFSA, three of which I would note here:

- The need for a clearer articulation of the knowledge and skills required of all our diplomats today, irrespective of cone or functional specialty;
- The quantity, quality and content of current training being offered and, in particular, the role of contractors with little firsthand experience in the practice of diplomacy as primary instructors; and
- The perverse incentives operating within the current corporate culture that discourage Foreign Service personnel from taking advantage of available training opportunities.

As Ambassador Ronald Neumann notes in his excellent testimony, the first three AAD recommendations focus on the urgent need to redress our chronic underinvestment in diplomacy and development by fully funding Diplomacy 3.0 hiring and by providing a 15-percent training reserve or "float," and by making a long-term commitment to investment in professional formation and training. If the current budget climate is such that the resources for developing a training reserve are not forthcoming, as he points out, other recommendations about improving the formation and professional development of members of the Foreign Service become meaningless. AFSA wholeheartedly concurs with this assessment.

Much has changed since adoption of the 1980 Foreign Service Act. Three decades ago, there was no internet, no digital world, no cyberspace, no Facebook or Twitter. Our diplomatic and development services were overwhelmingly male and white. Today they reflect America in its rich diversity, including geographic origin, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and age.

Today's entry-level officers represent an array of postgraduate degrees and experience. However, few of them have had exposure to the practice of diplomacy in the context of the Department of State, the U.S. government at the interagency level or the international diplomatic system. Nor are they well versed in the operations of the array of regional and international institutions so crucial to global problem-solving, or the equally vast universe of nongovernmental, private-sector and citizen-led organizations that also populate and contribute to almost every aspect of today's diplomatic arena.

In connection with AFSA's participation in and support for the AAD study on the training and education necessary for our diplomats to meet 21st-century challenges, AFSA invited a number of former U.S. diplomats now in academia to help define a core body of knowledge that should be common to all American diplomats. They noted the dramatic shifts in the geopolitical environment that foreshadow the rise of competing value systems and suggested that continued dominance of Western values should not be taken for granted. Hence, they emphasized that marginal changes to the status quo will not be sufficient to meet coming challenges. They also uniformly stressed the value of a well-defined, professional body of knowledge, introduced through a longer and more professionally oriented A-100 orientation course and deepened over time. A key aspect of successful training is the quality of instructors and an integrated curriculum drawing on a mix of methodologies used.

AFSA also undertook a quick "benchmarking the competition" study of what other diplomatic services are doing about professional development and training. Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Mexico and the United Kingdom all spend a great deal of time and resources on diplomatic education and professional formation. They clearly see their diplomatic services as a critical tool of national power and influence and invest accordingly. China, in particular, has moved from paying little real attention to professional formation and training to making it a priority. They have studied what other governments do and are working to exceed it. To have a first-class diplomatic service and maintain effective global leadership

through which to advance our national interests, we can no longer rely on being the world's only superpower. We must compete.

The huge advantage that the United States enjoys in the conduct of its international affairs by virtue of our unparalleled hard and soft power does not obviate the need to exercise astute professional diplomacy, to anticipate developments and to provide sound advice to policymakers on how best to promote our interests and avoid costly mistakes. Apart from general strengthening of our institutions of diplomacy and development, a well-designed system of diplomatic training and education is required in order to ensure professional excellence and a high-quality diplomatic service able to support and sustain our global leadership.

In a rapidly evolving international political and cultural environment, in which old verities are daily being transformed, continuing education, professional formation and training are key elements in diplomatic and national security readiness. A key element of such readiness is nimbleness in recognizing unfolding trends and responding effectively to the novel and shifting challenges confronting us.

Conclusion:

AFSA concurs with all the GAO recommendations and are pleased that the State Department does, as well. We would like to draw special attention to the critical importance of the first area of strategic weakness the GAO report identified: "Without a systematic, comprehensive assessment of training needs, State cannot be assured training is connected to true needs and priorities."

AFSA believes that in order to undertake an effective training needs assessment, the starting point must be a clear, plain English definition of what we are training for. The purpose cited in the GAO study quotes from the State Department's Annual Training Plan, which states that "The purpose of the department's training is to develop the men and women our nation requires to fulfill our leadership role in world affairs and to advance and defend U.S. interests." AFSA would like to see this statement of purpose made more specific and translated into operational terms for the State Department. We would also like to see this purpose related to the central themes of the department's recently completed Quadrennial Diplomatic and Development Review.

Secondly, we would like to see greater recognition of the importance of a well-defined, common sense of professional identity, professional expectations, standards and ethics as directly relevant to, and part of, professional formation and

training. The very diversity that we have achieved suggests that we may need to do more to ensure that our diplomatic service today can operate from a well defined foundation of professional standards and ethics, education, skills and know-how that is shared in common, rather than distributed haphazardly across the Service. To give credit where it is due, our military colleagues have demonstrated the role and importance of professional education and training in creating services that are more than the sum of their individual parts.

Our AFSA surveys of entry- and mid-level officers indicate that individual career development and competition, and narrowly defined, cone-driven functional technical expertise remain the main emphases of current Foreign Service training, rather than any common sense of professional identity, expectations, standards or ethics, or a collective sense of public service. This status quo cries out to be challenged. Not to do so diminishes the collective potential of those entering the Foreign Service today.

Third, AFSA believes that in order to prepare the next generation of American diplomats, now in mid-career, to lead the institution, there must be a system that ensures their participation in defining the needs and priorities of American diplomacy in the 21st-century.

AFSA welcomes the growing recognition of the urgent need for increased investment in American diplomacy and in the Foreign Service as an institution. It is equally important that attention be paid to how this investment is used to build the high-quality, professional Foreign Service that our nation needs to maintain our leadership role in an increasingly complex, competitive, unpredictable and interdependent world.

The State Department and the Foreign Service are at an unprecedented crossroads. With new crises developing daily -- increasingly in places that hitherto may have been "off the radar" -- it is a vital national security interest to ensure that the Foreign Service has the right number of people with the right skills and experience, in the right locations to create "smart power" to meet the challenges of 21st-century diplomacy.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. AFSA values your longstanding support of initiatives to enhance the diplomatic readiness of our civilian Foreign Service agencies. We particularly appreciate the leadership you have shown in convening this hearing, and we look forward to continuing to serve as a resource for you and your colleagues.

BACKGROUND
STATE DEPARTMENT TRAINING: INVESTING IN THE WORKFORCE TO
ADDRESS 21ST CENTURY CHALLENGES
MARCH 8, 2011

Background

The State Department is responsible for the development and implementation of U.S. foreign policy. To most effectively meet its responsibilities, State's employees must have the right knowledge, skills, and abilities to carry out the Department's priorities. In recent years, the Department has focused on hiring more personnel and increasing training opportunities to support long-term improvements to personnel readiness.

Staffing Initiatives at the State Department during the Past Decade

As a result of the post-Cold War "peace dividend" and the expansion of embassies into Eastern European nations, the State Department faced significant workforce shortfalls. By September 11, 2001, the Department had approximately a 20 percent staffing shortfall.¹

To begin to address this, then Secretary of State Colin Powell implemented the Diplomatic Readiness Initiative (DRI) in 2002, which increased staffing levels to support critical training needs and respond to emerging crises. Between 2002 and 2004, DRI allowed the State Department to hire 1,069 employees, the majority of whom were Foreign Service Officers (FSO). Despite this increase, by 2004, staffing demands principally in Iraq and Afghanistan required an increased number of FSOs and prevented the Department from adequately investing in longer-term training efforts.²

In 2006, the Department started the Transformational Diplomacy Initiative (TDI). According to former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, TDI would focus on U.S. diplomats working "on the front lines of domestic reform as well as the back rooms of foreign ministries" to help build more democratic and well-governed states.³ From 2006 to 2010, State increased its Foreign Service and civil service by 17 percent.⁴

In March 2009, the State Department announced plans to hire additional personnel to support its broad mission as part of its Diplomacy 3.0 Initiative. The Department plans to increase the Foreign Service by 25 percent and the civil service by 13 percent by fiscal year (FY) 2014.⁵

¹ The American Academy of Diplomacy, *A Foreign Affairs Budget for the Future: Fixing the Crisis in Diplomatic Readiness*, October 2008, p. 2.

² United States Government Accountability Office, *Department of State: Staffing and Foreign Language Shortfalls Persist Despite Initiatives to Address Gaps*, Report to the Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, GAO-06-894, August 2006, pp. 5 and 50-51.

³ United States Department of State and Broadcasting Board of Governors Office of Inspector General, *Report of Inspection: Interim Review of the Global Repositioning Program*, ISP-I-09-09, November 2008, p. 10.

⁴ United States Government Accountability Office, *Department of State: Additional Steps Are Needed to Improve Strategic Planning and Evaluation of Training for State Personnel*, Report to U.S. Senator Daniel K. Akaka, GAO-11-241, January 2011, p.5. Report not yet publicly released but available upon request to Subcommittee staff.

⁵ Ibid.

Training Programs at the State Department

The purpose of State's training program is "to develop the men and women our nation requires to fulfill our leadership role in world affairs and to advance and defend U.S. interests."⁶ State's primary training center, the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), is responsible for supporting more than 66,000 Foreign Service, civil service, and Locally Employed (LE) staff in Washington, D.C., and at 271 missions worldwide.⁷ State's funding for training has increased by more than 60 percent from fiscal years 2006 to 2010, and the Department requested approximately \$217 million for FY 2012.⁸

The FSI has four schools: the School of Language Studies; the School of Applied Information Technology; the Leadership and Management School; and the School of Professional and Area Studies.⁹ The Director of FSI, State's chief training officer, is responsible for establishing, administering, evaluating, and maintaining training at the Department. The Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of Human Resources is responsible for assigning Foreign Service and civil service employees to training, and works with the FSI Director to ensure that training programs meet Foreign Service and civil service needs.¹⁰

In FY 2010, FSI offered over 2,100 non-language classroom courses. In addition to providing training at its Arlington, Virginia campus, FSI offers courses at several locations in the United States, regional centers, and overseas locations.¹¹ In addition, FSI provides a wide variety of non-classroom training opportunities to State personnel. The FSI has increasingly used distance learning training. In FY 2010, FSI offered 190 customized courses via various technologies.¹²

State offers career development programs for employees in addition to FSI training. For instance, the Career Development Program for Foreign Service employees sets requirements for advancement in the senior ranks and focuses on developing needed skills. State has mentoring programs for entry-level and more experienced employees. Bureaus, offices, and posts have also developed their own training and professional development opportunities tailored to the specific needs of their employees. State employees are also allowed to participate in external training opportunities, such as military schools, non-degree fellowships, and long-term rotational positions at other federal agencies.¹³

Soon-to-be Released GAO Report on State Department's Overall Training for its Personnel

As noted above, the GAO examined State's structure for training personnel and the extent to which this training incorporates elements of effective federal training programs. GAO's report,

⁶ Ibid. p. 11 (citing U.S. Department of State Annual Training Plan).

⁷ Ibid., pp. 4, 7.

⁸ United States Department of State, *Congressional Budget Justification, Volume 1: Department of State Operations, Fiscal Year 2012*, February 2011, pp. 35-36.

⁹ GAO-11-241, p. 12.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 14.

¹² Ibid., pp. 15-16.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 16-18.

which will be released in conjunction with this hearing, found that State has developed an extensive training program through FSI and has taken steps to incorporate elements of an effective training program into its training, but that the Department's strategic approach to workforce training needs improvement. Specifically, GAO found that State lacks a comprehensive training needs assessment process; training guides do not provide the most accurate information on training and professional requirements, as well as suggested courses for employees; State does not track detailed information on training cost and delivery; State lacks a training data collection and analysis plan; and State's performance measures for training do not fully address training goals.¹⁴

GAO recommended that FSI and the Bureau of Human Resources (HR) develop and implement a plan for a comprehensive training needs assessment process; FSI and other bureaus and offices develop and update training information for employees; FSI and HR review the performance measures and revise or enhance them as appropriate; FSI and HR develop a data collection and analysis plan for training; and FSI and HR should identify ways to improve the collection and analysis of training data and results, including further incorporating locally employed staff into training evaluations. The State Department generally agreed with GAO's recommendations.¹⁵

GAO Reports on State Department Language Training

GAO has reported on language proficiency gaps at the State Department three prior times since January 2002. In its first report, GAO found that the Department had a shortage of Foreign Service Officers who met the language proficiency requirements of their positions and recommended that the Department adopt a strategic approach to its human capital management and workforce planning.¹⁶ In 2006, GAO reviewed the State Department's progress in meeting its foreign language capability requirements and found that its recommendation to the Department to take a strategic approach for human capital management was not fully addressed.¹⁷

GAO's September 2009 report demonstrated that the State Department continues to struggle in meeting its language capability requirements. Despite large remaining language gaps, the Department had not taken a comprehensive, strategic approach to addressing language proficiency. GAO found that the State Department's effort failed to provide a linked, strategic focus, relying on a large number of separate policies and initiatives to address different aspects of this challenge. GAO recommended that the Department develop a strategic plan to link all of its efforts to meet foreign language requirements, including measurable performance goals, a comprehensive process to identify foreign language requirements based on objective criteria, and

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 11-51.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 51-52.

¹⁶ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Foreign Language: Human Capital Approach Need to Correct Staffing and Proficiency Shortfalls*, Report to Congressional Requesters, GAO-02-375, January 2002, pp. 9-10 and 27.

¹⁷ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Department of State: Staffing and Foreign Language Shortfalls Persist Despite Initiatives to Address Gaps*, Report to the Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, GAO-06-894, August 2006, pp. 31-32.

a more effective mechanism to gather feedback from FSOs on the effectiveness of their language training.¹⁸

State Department's Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review

The State Department recently released its first *Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review* (QDDR), which is an assessment of how the Department can be more efficient and effective in advancing national interests abroad. The QDDR focuses on leading through “civilian power” by directing and coordinating the resources of all federal civilian agencies; supporting countries through development; and building coalitions to address global problems. Among the key QDDR recommendations related to personnel training were providing interagency training, especially for Chiefs of Mission and Deputy Chiefs of Mission; expanding training on development and economic issues, partnership development, and responding to security challenges; and increasing interagency rotations.¹⁹

A Way Forward

The American Academy of Diplomacy (Academy) and the Stimson Center released a report entitled, *A Foreign Affairs Budget for the Future: Fixing the Crisis in Diplomatic Readiness* in 2008. Although this report covered a broad range of diplomatic readiness issues, it highlighted training challenges at the State Department that are especially relevant. For instance, the report concluded that training lags because of personnel shortages and recommended that the Department increase staffing positions by 1,287 by FY 2014 to provide staffing flexibility for greater training and professional development opportunities; provide an additional year of formal training for each FSO before entering the Senior Foreign Service; and create a comprehensive career development program for each FSO.²⁰

Recently, the Academy and the Stimson Center released another report entitled, *Forging a 21st Century Diplomatic Service for the United States through Professional Education and Training*. The report highlights the importance of professional education and training to the overall performance of the Foreign Service, and calls on State, the Administration, and Congress to make a sustained commitment to providing the needed resources and funding. The report made several recommendations, including fully funding Diplomacy 3.0; incorporating and sustaining a 15 percent training float in the Foreign Service; ensuring that FSOs receive a combination of training and professional education; establishing a temporary corps of rotating counselors to address the problems that the mid-level gap has caused for mentoring; contracting a study that will examine best practices in the field to determine how on-the-job training can be most effectively conducted; requiring FSOs to complete a year of advanced study relevant to his/her

¹⁸ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Comprehensive Plan Needed to Address Persistent Foreign Language Shortfalls*, Report to the Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate, GAO-09-955, September 2009, pp. 3-5.

¹⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Leading Through Civilian Power: 2010 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review*, December 2010.

²⁰ The American Academy of Diplomacy, *A Foreign Affairs Budget for the Future: Fixing the Crisis in Diplomatic Readiness*, October 2008, pp. 11-12.

career track as a requirement for promotion to the Senior Foreign Service; and better preparing new Ambassadors before they reach their posts.²¹

Additional Information

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Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia, *A Review of U.S. Diplomatic Readiness: Addressing the Staffing and Foreign Language Challenges Facing the Foreign Service*, September 24, 2009. Written statements available at http://hsgac.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Hearings.Hearing&Hearing_id=b6e3eb17-3a3d-4acd-a1be-78be72bd9594.

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²¹ American Academy of Diplomacy, *Forging a 21st Century Diplomatic Service for the United States through Professional Education and Training*, February 2011, pp. 12-15.

U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Department of State: Comprehensive Plan Needed to Address Persistent Foreign Language Shortfalls*, Report to the Chairman and Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate, GAO-09-955, September 2009.

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